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PREDICAMENTS  
*or* MUSIC AND THE FUTURE



# PREDICAMENTS

*or* MUSIC AND THE FUTURE

AN ESSAY IN  
CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

BY  
CECIL GRAY

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## I. INTRODUCTORY

THE present book was originally conceived more than twenty years ago, as part of a trilogy, the other two parts of which have already appeared: *A Survey of Contemporary Music* in 1924 and *The History of Music* in 1928, in which the writer has attempted to give an account of the art of the present and of the past respectively. The dual purpose of this book is indicated by the ambiguous title; firstly, to set forth and examine the situation in which music finds itself to-day, and to supplement the foregoing *Survey* in several important respects; secondly, to determine, so far as is possible, the course of development that the art is likely to follow in the immediate future.

So far as is possible—but what reason is there, it may be asked, for supposing that it is possible at all? Surely such an aim is not merely arrogant and presumptuous, but also wholly chimerical and unrealizable, at best merely futile? These natural objections must be met at the outset.

Let it be frankly admitted, straight away, that the extent to which it is possible must, even in the most optimistic view, be exceedingly limited. The history

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of any human activity is in such large part a mere congeries of fortuitous events, conditioned by the special circumstances of the time and place at which they occurred, and by the idiosyncrasies of the particular individuals who took part in them or were responsible for them, as to be, to a great extent at least, incalculable in advance. If the nose of Cleopatra had been slightly shorter, says Pascal in a famous epigram, the entire face of the earth would have been different. On the other hand, without it being necessary to go so far as to endorse wholeheartedly the mechanistic and materialistic doctrines of the Marxian school of historians, or of the Hegelian school from which they derive, according to which individuals are mere passive instruments in the hands of an anonymous directing power, and who, even if they had never lived, would have been replaced more or less adequately by other individuals, it is nevertheless true that it is often possible to detect a certain element of necessity, logic, and inevitability in the workings of history.

So in art. If Mozart or Schubert had lived to be eighty years of age, if Beethoven had not chanced to become deaf, or if Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner had died in their cradles, no doubt the entire face of music to-day would be a very different one from

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what it is. But without necessarily accepting the doctrines of the French literary critic, Taine, and his followers, for whom the great artist is nothing more than the outcome of the combination and interaction of such impersonal forces as race, environment, and tradition, and therefore readily calculable, it is nevertheless impossible to deny that such considerations do play a definite, if restricted and secondary, role in the history of art. It may be a ridiculous exaggeration to say, as a recent music critic has done, that individual geniuses are of no more importance than cheese-mites in comparison with the history of the growth and evolution of the art of music as a whole; but it is none the less true that great composers often perform an impersonal function which would have got itself performed eventually somehow even if they themselves had never existed.

In other words, while it may be true that the achievement of many great artists is largely individual and independent of extraneous circumstances, others, on the contrary, seem to arise as if in response to a definite need, and accomplish tasks which were ready waiting for them, so to speak. Between these two extremes of the purely individual genius, owing practically nothing to any one or anything outside

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himself, and the artist who simply exemplifies a tendency or performs an historically necessary role, there are others—and they probably comprise the majority of great artists—in whom there is an intermingling in varying degrees of the personal and impersonal elements, a synchronization of individual genius and historic necessity. The former element in their achievement corresponds with the nose of Cleopatra, in the epigram of Pascal, and is utterly capricious and incalculable; but that secondary, though by no means negligible, element in their work which they receive from predecessors, share with contemporaries, and impart to successors—the cheese-mite aspect, in fact—can, I venture to submit, be to some extent determined in advance. We are certainly in possession of most of the necessary data for doing so; if we err it is our own fault, from insufficient perspicuity and insight. In the same way, in fact, that the meteorological expert is in a position to forecast, with a fair degree of accuracy, the general climatic conditions which are likely to prevail during the next twenty-four hours, so in the domain of art it ought to a certain limited extent to be possible to deduce future probabilities from present conditions, past analogies, and all the complex phenomena which together make up the *Zeit-*

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*geist*, or spirit of the age, and the *genius loci*, or spirit of place.

Whether practicable or impracticable, however, the undertaking is at least no more arrogant or presumptuous than is that of Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, or the meteorological experts of the Air Ministry. The present writer, in fact, makes no more claim to the possession of second sight, or any other abnormal faculty of prophetic intuition, than they do; and in precisely the same way that weather forecasts are at the very best exceedingly uncertain and almost as often wrong as right, he is cheerfully prepared to see many, if not most, of his anticipations falsified. Indeed, if as much as half of them should turn out to be moderately accurate he will have been successful beyond his most sanguine expectations. And in answer to the remaining question put forward in the second paragraph, as to what earthly purpose can possibly be served by indulging in such hazardous speculations concerning the future, one can only reply that they are useful and valuable in precisely the same way that weather forecasts are, or any of the other forms of intelligent anticipation in which we are wont to indulge every day of our lives.

It is seldom consciously realized, indeed, to what

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an extent we live in the future, to what an extent our notions and expectations concerning it are an important and even essential part of our existence. In taking thought for the morrow lies the primary and fundamental distinction between man and the lower animals; without forethought based upon probable eventualities and ultimate consequences, rational behaviour is impossible. It is true, as historians are so fond of telling us, that a knowledge of the past is necessary to the proper understanding of the present; it is equally true that without a definite preconception of what the future has in store for us—even if it should ultimately prove to have been erroneous—it is impossible to determine our present activities. We order our lives largely in accordance with our belief in or expectation of what is to come; it is probably even true to say that our actions are conditioned to a greater extent by anticipations of the future than by knowledge of the past or even by experience in the present. As Señor Ortega y Gasset writes, 'Whether we like it or not, human life is a constant preoccupation with the future. In this actual moment we are concerned with the one which follows.—Let it be clear, then, that nothing has a sense for man except in so far as it is directed towards the future.'

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Past, present, and future, indeed, are in reality one and indissoluble, interpenetrating and impinging upon each other to such an extent that it is impossible to form a clear idea of the one without taking the others into consideration. As Spinoza says, the present is made up of a portion of the past, which is remembered, and a portion of the future, which is anticipated.

No better example could be found of the power of a problematical future to affect the present than is afforded by the history of the Middle Ages in Europe, in the belief universally entertained that the year A.D. 1000—the Millennium—would witness the second coming of Jesus Christ, the end of the world, and the Day of Judgement. The effect of this profound conviction was to suspend almost entirely any interest in mundane matters during the years immediately preceding that date. Why take heed of the body when death and immortality were so close at hand? Why build churches, palaces, castles, which would all shortly crumble into dust at the first blast of the archangelic trumpet? Why trouble to write earthly music when people would so soon be hearing the choir of the heavenly hosts and the music of the spheres? The natural and inevitable consequence of such a state of mind was

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the widespread famine, plague, and utter sterility in art, science, and philosophy, which made this the darkest epoch in modern history. Once the milestone of the Millennium had been passed, however, and the corner of the century turned, men came gradually to realize that life on earth had still something to offer, and that endless possibilities lay ahead. As a direct consequence of the passing of this sense of impending catastrophe and finality which had paralysed all creative energy, and of the return of faith in the future, one finds a tremendous outburst of activity, manifesting itself in every walk of life: finding expression in the Crusades, in the development of the so-called Gothic style of architecture, in the emergence of the first modern poetry and music—that of the Provençal troubadours and minstrels—to mention only a few examples of the consequences entailed by this renewal of faith and confidence in the future.

These are only two spectacular instances of the way in which a hypothetical future can exert a decisive influence on the present, and anticipation can influence actuality; the same thing may be seen happening to a greater or lesser degree in every period of history and in every branch of human activity. During the nineteenth century, for



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example, humanity passed through a precisely contrary progression to that of the instance above cited. The spiritual key-note of the period beginning with the French Revolution was one of boundless confidence in the future, and the belief in the ideals of the Revolution, the perfectibility of man, and the *Aufklärung* was largely responsible for the characteristics of the greatest art of the period—of the music of Beethoven, to adduce an outstanding example. The subsequent collapse of these ideals, the state of exhaustion which followed the Napoleonic wars, the decisive failure of the revolutionary movement of 1848, brought about a momentary reaction, a spasm of disillusion which was likewise faithfully reflected in the art and thought of the time. This mood was voiced by Alfred de Musset in his *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle*. 'La génération qui a passé par '93 et par 1814 porte au cœur deux blessures. Tout ce qui était n'est plus, tout ce qui sera n'est pas encore,' and, describing the state of mind of his contemporaries he further says, 'Les hommes doutaient de tout, les jeunes gens nièrent tout. Les poètes chantaient le désespoir; les jeunes gens sortirent des écoles avec le front serein, le visage frais, et le blasphème à la bouche.'

This reaction did not last long, however. Under

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the inspiration of Darwinian theory a renewed wave of optimism took place. The gospel of Evolution took the place of that of Revolution, and the New Jerusalem was conceived as lying, not in the near future perhaps, but in a future none the less certain because it was distant, towards which mankind was slowly but steadily advancing, in a long crescendo destined to culminate in a climax of unimaginable splendour. With the possible exception of the age of the Renaissance, which was similarly intoxicated by a seemingly boundless vista of possibilities, there never was a period in the history of the human race more sublimely self-confident than the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade or so of the twentieth, and this *Weltanschauung* colours the most representative art and thought of the period. Nietzsche and his superman are perhaps the most characteristic expression of this triumphant and optimistic outlook on the future.

To-day, partly as a result of the catastrophe of 1914, partly as a result of new scientific discoveries suggesting that all we had hitherto believed concerning the nature of the universe was founded in error, partly, no doubt, as a reaction from the excessive exuberance of the preceding period, a phase of acute disillusion has once more set in, akin

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to that which occurred about a century ago, only very much more severe and intense. Now, as then, we are told that we are living in an age of transition in which, as Musset said, all that has been is no longer, while that which will be is not yet. On every side one hears it stated, as if it were an incontrovertible fact, that modern civilization is in decadence, that we are passing through the same phase to-day as that through which the Roman Empire passed before its final dissolution. Art, religion, democracy, aristocracy, culture, civilization, economics, morals, everything is in a state of flux and disintegration, from which none of them will emerge as it was before. The natural consequence of this contemplation of a dismal future has been the general adoption of an attitude strikingly analogous to that of those medieval people who believed in the proximate advent of the Millennium. The question inevitably presents itself: is it not just possible that the widespread conviction of the twilight of western civilization, this *Ragnarök* as the ancient Norsemen called it, is just as illusory now as then? There is this difference between the two cases: that whereas nothing our medieval ancestors could have done or left undone would have actually brought about or averted the occurrences they anticipated,

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it is only too true that the present implicit belief in an impending dissolution of the old order of things might very well bring it about, not because it was inevitable, but because we had resigned ourselves to it in advance, and abdicated without a struggle.

In this connexion a favourite argument is that which has recently been put forward by Mr. Joad, in his *Return to Philosophy*.

‘It is, I believe, a fact that many of those who are normally engaged in research or creative work find it difficult to-day to pursue their ordinary avocations. Over many of the sensitive-minded men and women of this generation hangs the menace of a great fear: the fear of the destruction by war of such civilization as we have achieved. . . . Inevitably, first-rate literary and artistic production falters or ceases altogether. How can a man think, let alone dream, when the hills and valleys are filled with the echoes of marching feet? The creative artist demands a quiet background—a civilized environment, alert, interested, reasonably secure.’

Well, he may demand it, but when, in the course of the endless blood-bath that is history, has he ever had it? Did not the great creators of ancient Greece live under the perpetual menace of a great fear, the fear of the destruction by war of such civilization as they had achieved? Did not Raphael, Michael

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Angelo, and Leonardo live and work in a period of tumult, anarchy, and dissolution? Did the echoes of marching feet throughout his lifetime prevent Beethoven from writing great music?

The best answer to such unmanly whimperings and defeatism is contained in a fable of Robert Louis Stevenson. One day on board a ship at sea, the first lieutenant rushed panic-stricken into the captain's cabin, crying out that the ship was sinking. 'Very well,' replied the captain, 'but that is no reason for going about half-shaved. Exercise your mind, Mr. Spoker, and you will see that to the philosophic eye there is nothing new in our position: the ship (if she is to go down at all) may be said to have been going down ever since she was launched.' The officers then went on deck, where they found that the crew had broken into the spirit-room and were fast getting drunk. 'My men,' said the captain, 'there is no sense in this. The ship is going down, you will tell me, in ten minutes: well, and what then?—All our lives long we may have been about to burst a blood-vessel or to be struck by lightning, not merely in ten minutes, but in ten seconds; but that has not prevented us from eating dinner, no, nor from putting money in the Savings Bank.' Then in the powder-magazine they found an old sailor

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smoking his pipe, and being asked why, he replied apologetically that he understood that the ship was sinking. 'And suppose she were?' said the Captain. 'To the philosophic eye there is nothing new in our position. Life, my old shipmate, life, at any moment, in any view, is as dangerous as a sinking ship; yet it is man's handsome fashion to carry umbrellas, to wear india-rubber overshoes, to begin vast works, and to conduct himself in every way as if he might hope to be eternal. And for my own part I should despise the man who, even on board a sinking ship, should omit to take a pill or to wind up his watch.'

The fable ends with the captain becoming infected by the fatalism of the others and himself recklessly lighting a cigar in the powder-magazine, whereupon two minutes later the ship blew up with a glorious detonation. Blew up, observe, not sank. The parallel is singularly close and apt. To-day all around us we hear it prophesied that the ship of civilization is going down. Without troubling to ascertain whether there is any foundation for the belief, those whose duty it is in any case to attempt to save the ship have either lost their heads, like the mate, and gone rushing about in an indecorous and undignified state of panic; or else like the majority of the crew, have sought refuge in some form of

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intoxication or oblivion; or else like the old sailor, through a kind of perverse and active fatalism have risked bringing about an avoidable catastrophe through their own foolish and reckless behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

Is it true that the present age is an age of transition, a moment of uneasy suspense between what has been and what will be; or is this sense of crisis illusory, self-induced, and hypochondriacal as it would seem to have been in the time of Musset, which to us now appears to have been, on the contrary, a period of exceptional creative activity and, moreover, one which does not at all give the impression of having effected a sharp break in the continuity which binds one generation to another? Is it not rather true to say that all ages are necessarily, inevitably, fatally, periods of transition? Those periods which seem to us to be wrapped in Olympian calm and serenity and repose, seemed no doubt, to those who lived in them, to be periods of acute crisis and transition. The probability that this is so is strengthened by the fact that it is invariably the more remote periods that present to us the aspect of greater tranquillity: just as, in a railway train, near

<sup>1</sup> Another relevant nautical simile is the story of the *Mary Celeste*, which was found adrift upon the high seas, deserted by her crew in a panic, though perfectly intact.

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objects pass in a flash, while the distant prospect seems motionless. It is even quite possible that our descendants in five hundred years time will envy us the Augustan calm and statuesque repose which characterized our golden age, in such striking contrast to the state of flux and turmoil in which they are condemned to live. We have seen what Musset and his contemporaries felt about their age, and his words might have been written to-day, so aptly do they reflect the prevailing consensus of opinion. 'This unhappy time,' writes Bertrand Russell, 'haunted by ghosts from a dead world, and not yet at home in its own . . . we are at the present day passing through a somewhat confused period, when many people have thrown over the old standards without acquiring new ones'—what is this but a restatement of Musset's lament? Yet in between Musset's age and our own we find Matthew Arnold

Wandering between two worlds, one dead  
The other powerless to be born.

Not only, then, is this sense of transition common to all periods, but also the conviction of decadence. We need look no further than the pages of Ruskin and Carlyle for a scathing indictment of the Victorian age. Wordsworth, writing shortly before it, calls



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his age 'this degenerate age'. Earlier than that, in 1797, Burke declared that 'barbarism is entering upon us', and Cowper in 1782 records that England is 'sunk into a state of decrepitude'. To Edmund Spenser, in the *Faery Queene*,

Meseems the world is run quite out of square

From the first point of his appointed source,

And being once amiss grows daily worse and worse.

Nor is this merely an English phenomenon. To Montaigne the sixteenth century is 'ce siècle corrompu et ignorant', 'une saison si licencieuse et málade — si gátée', and Ronsard similarly speaks of 'un temps si vicieux' and 'un siècle perverti'. Roger Bacon again, writing in the thirteenth century, complains that 'more sins reign in these days of ours than in any past age—Let us see all conditions in the world and consider them diligently everywhere, we shall find boundless corruption'. The pages of the literature of antiquity are full of similar laments; even in the great Augustan age we find Horace (*Odes* iii. 6) complaining

Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit

nos nequiores, mox daturos

progeniem vitiosiore<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Some of these instances and quotations are taken from a recent leading article in *The Times Literary Supplement*, entitled 'The Golden Age'.

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The present age, then, is by no means unique in supposing itself to be in a state of transition, or even of positive decadence. Every age believes itself to be, and no doubt is, an age of transition, and every age has had its equivalents of the red-faced, white-moustached Colonel who, from his arm-chair in the bow-window of his club in Piccadilly or Pall Mall, fulminates against contemporary conditions and laments the departure of the good old days, and can't think what things are coming to—'everything going to the dogs, demme'—and on the other hand, the restless, dissatisfied, pimply youth, hankering after an inaccessible moon; both agreed on one point, however, that the present is intolerable, and differing only in the nature of the remedies they propose—the one wishing to restore the past and the other to destroy both past and present and create a new heaven and earth.

Now, these are both excellent people in their different ways, and both perform a necessary function, of brake and accelerator respectively, but they are not the engine, they do not supply the motive power or control the direction. Most of us begin as idealistic youths and end up as curmudgeonly club-bores, but it is not in either capacity that our activities are of primary constructive value. What

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seems to be unique in our age, what appears to differentiate it from all others of which we have any record, is a creeping paralysis or inertia of the machine itself, of the constructive elements in modern society. Just as in the fable of Stevenson the captain of the ship became infected with the prevailing anarchy and sat smoking his cigar in the powder-magazine, so to-day the leaders of opinion and the authoritative guides of their generation openly proclaim their hopelessness and powerlessness in the face of present difficulties. In the words of Yeats: 'The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.'

In no sphere of activity is this phenomenon more marked than in music. The orderly and harmonious line of development which had been pursued for centuries appears, momentarily at least, to have been checked, deflected, or even entirely broken. On the one hand we find violent experiments in every conceivable direction save that in continuation of the line traced by our immediate predecessors; on the other is to be perceived a headlong and precipitate retreat to the ideals and technical procedures of a former age. And between these two extremes of revolutionary innovation and conservative reaction, of which atonalism and neo-classicism respectively

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are the most characteristic and important manifestations, the vast majority of creative musicians stand helplessly rooted to the ground in growing uncertainty and perplexity. It is taken for granted that no progress along what may be vaguely and comprehensively termed 'traditional' lines is possible to-day, that the most we of the present age can hope to do is to destroy the old order so as to make way for those who are to come after. We even derive a curiously masochistic, melancholy satisfaction from this notion of our transitionalism. How often do we not hear a writer, a painter, a musician of to-day, excusing himself, or being excused by others, for the imperfections of his work—which is readily admitted by him or by them—in comparison with that of other ages on the grounds that it is the fault of the age in which he happens to live—that had he lived some fifty years earlier, or fifty years later, everything would have been different? To admit this, to proclaim from the housetops one's imperfections and yet seek to excuse them by blaming them on the conditions of one's time—nothing could be more abject and pusillanimous than this. It relieves us of all responsibility, inducing us to regard ourselves as the victims of circumstance, while at the same time we assign to ourselves in

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history the glorious role of forerunners, pioneers of the new order which is to come. 'To us, perhaps,' we murmur smugly, 'it is not given to achieve enduring masterpieces, but in our gropings and experimentations lies the seed which in the hands of our successors will some day lead to great results.' And this state of mind is largely, if not entirely, due to the apocalyptic kind of belief, so prevalent to-day, in the immanent passing of an old order and the inauguration of a new, and to the deep-rooted conviction of belonging to a period of transition.

The state of music at the present time, in fact, is chiefly due to a definite conception of the future—whether right or wrong remains to be seen. It follows that the future is not merely as legitimate a province for the exercise of critical inquiry as the past, but one which it is positively necessary for us to enter upon if we would seek to understand the present aright. Ultimately, all our critical estimates of present activities are coloured, if not completely conditioned, by our views on the future. To take a simple concrete example: there is unquestionably no more crucial or momentous issue in music to-day than that raised by the so-called atonalism or twelve-note-scale music of Arnold Schönberg and his followers. If we believe, as many do, that this

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music, or something based upon it, is destined to be the music of the future, then we shall naturally accord to it an exalted and honoured position in the history of the music of our time, quite apart from the question of its merits or demerits, aesthetically considered. If, on the other hand, we believe, as many others do, that it is a mere decadent aberration, a road leading nowhere, we shall naturally dismiss it with contempt, or at least indifference. The rightness or the wrongness of our critical judgement in this case will be seen, therefore, to depend in large measure on our view of the future. It would not be going too far to say, in fact, that no criticism of present activities can hope to possess ultimate validity unless it is based upon a sound prescience of those that are to come. The critic or historian, indeed, who is unable or insufficiently courageous to commit himself to any positive views concerning future developments, is completely negligible; his views carry no weight, for this is a part, and a very important part, of his function. It was Carducci, I think, who said that 'ogni conclusione di critica ha da riuscire profezia',<sup>1</sup> and it is very true. It was

<sup>1</sup> The Italian is, strictly speaking, untranslatable here, for in this context *riuscire* combines the meaning of 'to succeed', 'to become', and 'to appear'.

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never more true than at the present time. At this particular historical juncture at which we live, in fact, clear-sighted prospection is a more urgent and immediate necessity than either retrospection or circumspection—prevision of the future than contemplation of either past or present.

No apology, then, is needed—certainly none is offered—for the present attempt to forecast the developments to which the art of music is likely to give rise in the immediate future. It only remains to be added that, while it is certainly hoped that the ordinary reader and music-lover will find the following pages interesting, they are primarily intended for the younger generation of actively creative musicians in this country. In former days it was no doubt possible, and even desirable, that the artist should create solely out of his inner consciousness, without taking thought, and accepting contentedly a definite established tradition; but, whether for better or for worse, this is no longer possible to-day, or even desirable. 'Deliberate reasoning occurs in our mortal life when the soul is uncertain and troubled and not at its best. For the need of reasoning is a defect or inadequacy of comprehension. So in the arts; when there is no hitch the imagination governs the artist and achieves the work; but when

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the artist falters, reasoning takes the reins.' Thus the sage Plotinus, of all ancient thinkers the one who has written most understandingly and illuminatingly concerning aesthetic problems. His words are peculiarly applicable to the present time, when the soul of a whole generation is uncertain and troubled and not at its best, and its artists falter and reasoning takes the reins, for causes already amply set forth in the foregoing pages. Hence it is that we find so many creative artists of the present time devoting what seems to be a disproportionate amount of time and energy to theoretical considerations and speculations, in an attempt to clarify their thoughts and to arrive at an understanding of the problems with which they are confronted in their work.

It was in this spirit that the present book, like its two predecessors, was conceived and written. If the conclusions arrived at should be the means of enabling one or two potential creators to think their way more clearly through the difficulties that beset them, the main purpose of the book will have been achieved.



## II. EVOLUTION AND DEVOLUTION

IN the first chapter of *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, entitled 'Introductory Remarks on the Art of Prophecy', Mr. G. K. Chesterton looks back, in imaginary retrospect from eighty years hence, at those thinkers of the present time who 'were prophesying with every variety of ingenuity what would happen soon, and they all did it in the same way, by taking something they saw "going strong", as the saying is, and carrying it as far as ever their imagination could stretch'.

Most of the attempts hitherto made to forecast the future of music have been along these lines. They have all sought, in fact, to produce, in the Euclidean sense of the word, the lines of the present into the future, in the assumption that everything will be the same as now, only more so.

Such a conception of the future is, of course, only the natural and logical counterpart to the evolutionary conception of the past history of the art which prevailed during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. As Dean Inge says in his *God and the Astronomers*:

'It is a commonplace that for nearly a hundred years

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we have used the concept of Evolution as a general framework in which to set our ideas about history, natural science, civilization, and politics. The idea of evolution has taken possession of philosophy and religion, and has been predominant in all the thought of our time—the ineluctable law of progress which was destined, beyond a peradventure, to lead the human race onward to a condition of absolute perfection. Herbert Spencer, heaven knows why, identified progress with increasing complexity. Man, the roof and crown of things, is becoming more complex, and therefore more sublime, to all eternity.’

The learned Dean does not mention art in this connexion, but evolutionary ideas during this period were equally rampant in the domain of aesthetics, and more particularly the aesthetics of music; in accordance with which the history of the art was habitually represented as a gradual but steady and undeviating process of growth and development from the simplest and most primitive beginnings in early times up to the refinements and complexities of our present Western European practice. Mr. William Wallace, for example, wrote some twenty years ago, in his book entitled *The Musical Faculty*, that

‘if we contrast the highest musical achievement of even a hundred years ago with the music we have to-day, we

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shall see an advance in thought and imagination which is almost inconceivable. It would be no feat for a composer to write another *Orfeo* to-day with his faculty developed through the knowledge and experience of composers since Gluck, but practically every bar of a modern music-student would have been a gigantic achievement had it been written in 1762.—It is not a question of the convention or idiom of the time; it is rather a sign of the art advancing towards maturity through one brain after another, each adding something that was beyond the imagination of the preceding generation.'

The futuristic corollary to this view of past and present is, of course, that if we were able to contrast the highest musical achievement of the present day with that of a hundred years hence, we should find in the latter an almost inconceivable advance of thought and imagination; that the music-student of that time will be writing music every bar of which would be a gigantic achievement if it were written to-day; that, in short, the composers of 2030 will be as far beyond Schönberg and Stravinsky as the latter are, presumably, beyond Gluck.

This is not a parody, or an exaggeration even, as we see from another book of Mr. Wallace, *The Threshold of Music*, in which we find him writing as follows:

'I believe that, viewed in correlation with man's other faculties, music is still in its infancy, and that the utmost

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effort of the most notable composer of our own time, or of past time, will be but an iota in the inscription recording man's endeavour towards its accomplishment. It will be to a future generation what our present music would have been to a Hellene of the age of Pericles—an aspect of art unconceived and inconceivable.'

Such was the radiant vision of past inadequacies, present achievements, and future possibilities, that unfolded itself before the dazzled eyes of musical critics and historians a generation ago—the picture of a long continual ascent from the mud to the stars, an unending crescendo as in Ravel's *Bolero*, starting with the drumming of a bare rhythm (which is the conventional evolutionary idea of the earliest and most primitive music), and gradually adding instrument after instrument.

This conception of musical history still persists to some extent, so far as the past is concerned at least, in witness whereof one need only point to the endless profusion of books and essays and lectures and wireless talks which purport to reveal the story of music's 'growth', 'progress', 'development', or 'evolution'. On the whole, however, it is probably true to say that this conception no longer accurately mirrors contemporary opinion; those who hold to it belong for the most part to the older generation.

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Paradoxically enough, in fact, those who cling most closely to the evolutionary conception of musical history to-day are generally those least in sympathy with the more extreme manifestations of contemporary music, which they ought, in accordance with their beliefs, to hail enthusiastically as further milestones along the road to perfection in a distant future.

To-day, indeed, the contrary doctrine is more likely to commend itself to our disillusioned, somewhat jaundiced outlook: namely, the aesthetic equivalent of the modern scientific doctrine of entropy, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, in accordance with which everything in the universe is running down like a clock that has been wound up. In its application to art the implication is that, so far from progressing towards a golden age in the future, we are receding from one in the past; that so far from music being in its infancy it is in its dotage or second childhood. It is interesting to note that an attempt has already been made, by Mr. Robert Byron in *The Birth of Western Painting*, to present precisely such a conception of the history of the sister art, as being, in fact, the record of a steady degeneration from the Byzantine ideal to a nadir in modern times, the only momentary arrest in the otherwise

unrelieved process of decline being, of course, due to El Greco—and a very convincing thing he makes of it. Mr. Bernhard Berenson, too, in his *Studies in Mediaeval Painting*, unconsciously realizes Anatole France's satire on the art critic in *L'Île des Pingouins*, by acclaiming the primitive Margaritone and his school as 'perhaps the greatest period of art since the Greeks in the world's history', in comparison with which later developments show a lamentable decadence. Consequently we may expect to see in the near future a history of music conceived on these lines, and it would not necessarily be any less convincing than the theories of the distinguished art-critics mentioned above. Indeed, the standards of value to which this fresh view of musical history would give form and expression are already to a great extent unconsciously endorsed by many thinking people. Many music-lovers, perhaps most, would be prepared to concede that Beethoven and Schubert were greater than Wagner and Brahms; many would be disposed to affirm that Haydn and Mozart were superior to Beethoven and Schubert; even more would claim that Bach and Handel were greater than any of them. Further, it would be easy to make out a plausible case for the contention that Bach, with his introduction of equal temperament

in tuning, and in other ways, was the arch-destroyer of music, and the case for Palestrina as against Monteverdi and his fellow innovators is an exceedingly strong one. For many, again, incontestably the most interesting and moving numbers in the programmes of the festival of French music given in connexion with the exhibition of French painting at Burlington House a few years ago were not the latest but the earliest—such things as the twelfth-century *Conductus* of Pérotin le Grand, the thirteenth-century canon *Vetus abit litera*, the Rondeau *Alle Psallite* of Adam de la Hale, the *Plourès Dames* of Guillaume de Machault, and so forth. Some day, no doubt, a Byron or a Berenson of musical criticism will proclaim that the great age of music was that of Pérotin le Grand, and that with Dunstable and Dufay we enter upon the period of unrelieved decadence which has lasted until the present day. Already, however, Huysmans had gone very much further than that even, when in his *En Route* he expressed the opinion that Gregorian chant constitutes the highest point to which musical art has ever attained, and from which we have since progressively declined; while the folk-song enthusiasts, whom we have always with us, equally stoutly maintain that all art-music whatsoever,

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including even Gregorian chant, is a degenerate growth in comparison with the unspoilt paradisaical beauty of the object of their predilection.

On the face of it, then, the advocates of musical entropy have just as convincing a case as have the believers in endless progress and evolution. Those who think like them will consequently anticipate in the future a still further fall from musical grace, and will experience no difficulty in finding good cause for their forebodings in many contemporary developments.

These two diametrically opposite views, the optimistic and the pessimistic, the ascending and the descending, the evolutionary and the devolutionary, may be aptly represented by the musical symbols  $\angle$  and  $\triangleright$ ; a third conception of musical history, which claims many adherents, unites the two, thus  $\angle \triangleright$ , postulating all developments as parts of a curve—a steady ascent up to a point and a subsequent steady fall, constituting three main phases which may be conveniently designated as the primitive or archaic, the mature or classical, and the romantic or decadent. Those who subscribe to this view generally regard all music anterior to Palestrina as pertaining to the first category; the period stretching between Palestrina and



Beethoven as belonging to the second, and the phase initiated by Weber and Berlioz, and still continuing—or just ended—to the third.

Naturally, most of those who adopt this view of musical history tend to regard the future of the art with misgiving and even dismay; some, however, contrive to regard it hopefully, on the grounds that, according to them, the ultimate nadir has been passed, and that in contemporary activities are to be found the prodromes of a new art, the beginnings of a new period of ascent, the initial stages of a new trajectory which is destined to attain to as great a height as any that have preceded it—a fresh primitive or archaic period, in short.

Here, then, we have three distinct and contradictory conceptions concerning the possible future of music, all of which are plausible and can be seriously maintained; the first optimistic, the second pessimistic, the third alternatively one or the other. Let us now consider them in detail, and attempt to discover, if possible, how much of truth, if any, they respectively contain.

That there is in a certain sense such a thing as growth, evolution, development, progress in music, is a self-evident fact which stands in no need of demonstration. The modern composer obviously

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disposes of a much more subtle, complex, and responsive idiom and vocabulary than his predecessor of, say, a hundred or even fifty years ago, who in his turn stood in the same position of superiority to his predecessor, and so on. But one must be singularly naïve or blinded by evolutionary dogmas to represent this principle of idiomatic growth and development as a continual process and an invariably beneficent force, as most musical historians do. Not merely is the rate of progress, when present, a very fluctuating one, but it is often completely in abeyance and is sometimes even positively retrogressive. Progress is not always synonymous with increasing complexity, as our musical Herbert Spencers fondly suppose, but often, perhaps generally, operates by means of drastic simplification, and a process of stripping and pruning to bare essentials. As Dean Inge rightly observes elsewhere in the book from which quotation has already been made: 'Complexity is often a false step in evolution, irrelevant complexity is a sign of maladaptation. The modern aeroplane is much simpler than some of the awkward flying machines which preceded it. Civilised languages are much simpler than savage languages.' And so in music. It does not necessarily follow that because the idiom of

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Wagner or Strauss is more complex than that of Mozart or Haydn, therefore it represents progress in an aesthetic sense; it might very well connote precisely the opposite, and in these particular cases probably the majority of music-lovers would agree that it did.

However that may be, it is impossible to justify the sweeping dictum that musical idiom has advanced steadily from a simple, primitive state up to a highly complex and mature state, even from a purely materialistic point of view. The polyphonic art of the thirteenth century, in which popular melodies were frequently combined on a plain-song *canto fermo*, was frequently of great complexity, while the art which succeeded it was exceedingly simple in comparison.

The music of Palestrina, again, is simplicity itself compared with that of his predecessor Josquin and his contemporaries, and yet is complex in comparison with the art of his successors the Florentine experimenters, Peri and Caccini, which was little more than a drastic simplification of existing resources, and less notable for what they created than for what they destroyed. Here, decidedly, even in a purely material sense, there is no progress, while in an aesthetic sense it certainly

cannot be maintained that the simplification of the Florentines constituted an advance on the art of Palestrina. From every point of view the new departure represented a definite retrogression. Again, the art of Haydn is simple as compared with that of his predecessor Bach, but it would be impossible to say that this comparative simplicity constitutes either an advance or a retrogression—it is merely different. And if it is true, as it probably is, that from the time of Haydn up to the present day a more or less steady, unbroken line of development can be perceived, it does not necessarily follow that it will so continue in the future. As Mr. Chesterton ironically observes in continuation of the passage quoted at the beginning of the chapter,

‘Just as when we see a pig in a litter larger than the other pigs we know that by an unalterable law of the Inscrutable it will some day be larger than an elephant—just as we know when we see weeds and dandelions growing more and more thickly in a garden, that they must, in spite of all our efforts, grow taller than the chimney pots and swallow the house from sight; so we know and reverently acknowledge, that when any power in human politics has shown for any period of time any considerable activity, it will go on until it reaches to the sky.’

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Nothing, indeed, is more widespread than the delusion that because, for example, a hundred years ago the maximum speed at which mankind could travel was about thirty miles per hour, whereas to-day it is three hundred, in another century we shall inevitably be travelling at three thousand; that because in the last century and a half the outward semblance and vocabulary of music have been changed and enlarged out of all recognition, it will automatically continue to do so indefinitely. All historical analogies and even common-sense probabilities point to exactly the contrary conclusion. Indeed, it is precisely because the idiomatic development of music has been so rapid and phenomenal in recent times that in the immediate future we are more likely to witness a definite slowing down, cessation, or even a positive retrogression in this respect; and in certain contemporary tendencies to which we shall have occasion to refer at length later on there is more than a suggestion that this process is already in operation.

However that may be, it must be conceded that the history of musical art, viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*, in its totality from the earliest times up to the present, does show some kind of progress or evolution in a material sense. It would, indeed, be

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idle to deny that the art has developed and grown, in some way or another, for better or for worse, from the simple unisonal Gregorian chant up to the complexities of, say, Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. It is a childish error, however, to suppose that this development is synonymous with progress in a purely aesthetic sense of the word. As Benedetto Croce says in his book on aesthetics:

'Some talk of the infancy of Italian art in Giotto and of its maturity in Raphael or in Titian, as though Giotto were not complete and absolutely perfect, granted the material of feeling with which his mind was furnished. He was certainly incapable of drawing a figure like Raphael or of colouring it like Titian; but was Raphael or Titian capable of creating the *Marriage of Saint Francis with Poverty*, or the *Death of Saint Francis*?'

Obviously not, and it is similarly true that although Palestrina, Lassus, or Victoria may have been incapable of writing like Bach, or Mozart, or Beethoven, the converse is equally true. One can go even further and say that, in the same way that the pre-historic drawings in the caves of the Dordogne are in their way as perfect as anything that has ever been done since, so there are Gregorian chants of 1,500 years ago which have yet to be sur-

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passed even by a modern music student (strange though it may seem) having at his finger-ends all the clichés of the schools from Bach to Stravinsky. There is, indeed, no music in the world which can claim to excel the finest specimens of Gregorian chant, or even to equal them, for in their way they are unique. Similarly there is a rugged grandeur and an overflowing intellectual vitality in the art of Josquin des Prés and other old Flemish masters which are assuredly not to be found in Palestrina; there is a radiant spirituality in Palestrina which we shall seek in vain in Bach; a depth and a profundity in him that is lacking in Mozart; a grace, poise, and serenity in him that we miss in Beethoven; a heroic strength and nobility of soul in him that are not in Wagner; a sensuousness and emotional intensity in him that are not in Strauss, and so on and so forth. To such an extent is this true, indeed, that it is tempting to go to the opposite extreme from that of the evolutionary dogmatists, and to maintain that the indubitable progressive enrichment of technical means in modern times has not been accompanied by a corresponding development of intrinsic thought, creative imagination, or even constructive power, but has rather been achieved at their expense.

The belief that the great days of artistic creation

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are already over is one that has frequently found expression in philosophy. Hegel, for example, in his *Philosophy of Fine Art*, declares that

‘Art is no longer able to discover that satisfaction of spiritual wants which previous epochs have sought for in it and exclusively found in it. The fair days of Greek art, as also the golden time of the later Middle Ages, are over. The present time is not, if we view its conditions in their widest range, favourable to art.—Art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest possibilities, a thing of the past.’

Spengler, in his *Decline of the West*, carries the same line of thought further, saying that

‘The bitter conclusion is that it is all irretrievably over with the arts of form of the West. What is practised to-day—be it music after Wagner or painting after Cézanne—is impotence and falsehood. Look where one will, can one find the great personalities that would justify the claim that there is still an art of determinate necessity? Look where one will, can one find the *self-evidently necessary* task that awaits such an artist? We go through all the exhibitions, the concerts, the theatres, and find only industrious cobblers and noisy fools, who delight to produce something for the market, something that will ‘catch on’ with a public for whom art and music and drama have long ceased to be spiritual necessities. At what a level of inward and outward dignity stands



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to-day that which is called art and those who are called artists! In the shareholders' meeting of any limited company, or in the technical staff of any first-rate engineering works there is more intelligence, taste, character, and capacity than in the whole music and painting of present-day Europe.'

It has to be admitted that there is an uncomfortable ring of truth in much of this savage indictment. When we consider for a moment the personalities who dominate the present-day world of art in Europe we can only agree with Spengler—it is a dismal prospect, beyond a doubt. But it is probable that it was always so; the charlatans and mediocrities who occupy the attention of their contemporaries always outnumber the truly significant figures in such enormous proportion that the latter sink into insignificance in comparison, and at the time, no doubt, hardly seem to exist at all. Nevertheless the age which possesses three or four such great personalities can consider itself rich, and it is by no means certain, despite the justice of Spengler's strictures in general, that our age is any worse off in this respect than any other age. That there is more bad art to-day than ever before is probably true, but that there is less good art is not so certain.

As for Spengler's dictum to the effect that 'all is

irretrievably over' with art, we have only to compare it with that of Hegel made a century earlier, in order to recover something of our equanimity; for, it need hardly be pointed out, the earlier thinker's elegy over the position of art in the modern world was uttered, ironically enough, at the very outset of a tremendous burst of creative activity which has made the nineteenth century one of the richest in the whole history of art. Never, indeed, has art been more vital than since Hegel wrote; never before, perhaps, has the world witnessed such an intense and disinterested passion for art as in the last century. It was the age of splendid and heroic self-sacrifice in the cause of art—the age of vast projects in the execution of which whole lifetimes were consumed—a *Faust*, a *Comédie Humaine*, a *Ring*, and many other such. Not even did the early Christians more eagerly court martyrdom for their ideals than the great creators of the nineteenth century; with no greater persistence did the medieval alchemists seek the philosopher's stone than such an artist as Gustave Flaubert sought artistic perfection. In the nineteenth century art bade fair to become a religion and a philosophy in itself. There is no reason to suppose that Spengler is more likely to be right in this respect than Hegel, to say the least.

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One is probably justified in ascribing to a great extent these crocodile-tear threnodies on the part of philosophers over the sad fate of modern art and artists to a kind of *Schadenfreude* or wish-fulfilment. Philosophers have always from the earliest times been jealous and resentful of the power and influence of art, so much greater than that which they themselves can exercise, and would gladly see the last of it. Even in the scanty fragments of the earliest Greek philosophers, such as Xenophanes and Heraclitus, we find evidence of this antagonism and hostility on the part of thinkers towards art, in the form of gibes at Homer; and in the first of all great philosophic systems that have come down to us, that of Plato, we find already fully grown the completest, most unsparing and intolerant manifestation of it. The only difference between ancient and modern, Plato and Hegel, is that whereas the former proscribes the artist and expels him from his ideal Republic, the latter attempts by suggestion to make out that the poor fellow no longer matters at all, and is to all intents and purposes dead.

It is perfectly natural and understandable, then, that philosophers should feel as they do about art, but it is exceedingly curious that certain artists should seem willing to comply with the suggestion

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and to commit *hara-kiri* on the carpet of philosophy, kneeling at the feet of the idol of pure thought. Mr. Bernard Shaw, for example, in *Back to Methuselah*, dismisses art as a mere toy for humanity in a childish stage of development. Mr. Clifford Bax, in his study of Leonardo da Vinci, writes of his subject as if he were a Shavian Ancient who was only interested in art as a young man and, when he developed and matured, became increasingly a pure scientist and abstract thinker: implying that Leonardo's process of development in this respect was a microcosm of human experience and of the race in general, which is similarly destined to outgrow the children's playthings of art and devote itself to the 'higher' activities of science and mathematics.

To these dismal and speciously plausible arguments it is only necessary to reply that this picture of a human race growing older and wiser as time goes on is merely a picturesque myth. In the first place, even if one believes in it literally and naïvely, as Messrs. Shaw and Bax would seem to do, it may be pointed out that old age and wisdom are not necessarily synonymous. There is a folly of old age just as much as there is a wisdom of youth—nothing, indeed, could be sillier than a silly old man. Apart from that, however, if we look around us at

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the world of to-day we must be singularly optimistic and rosily-spectacled to be able to detect any sign of wisdom or even relative maturity. It is doubtful, indeed, whether in the whole of its history the human race has ever been more demonstrably and pathetically childish than it is at present. Whether the human race is ever going to grow up or not, it is at least certain that it has not done so yet and shows no immediate signs of doing so. Whatever advance or recession has taken place in recorded history, human nature has not perceptibly altered in essentials; and art, as far back as we can see, has proved itself to be one of the essentials of life, second only—if that—to the need for food and drink, or the desire of man for woman. In these respects there is absolutely no difference between modernity and antiquity; there is consequently no reason to suppose that there will be between modernity and futurity. But even if, as observed above, there should prove to be, the time has assuredly not arrived yet.

The very distinction between the two faculties of art and science which is implied in the foregoing conception is a purely artificial one. How can we ever say where intellect begins, where intuition ends? How are we to differentiate between them?

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What constitutes the essential distinction between them? The processes of genius are identically the same in art, in science, in religion, in philosophy; they are all different modes of apprehending truth. The history of thought shows that all great scientific discoveries have been the verification of a spontaneous intuition, or inspiration, just as all great works of art are. The value of a great philosophic system does not reside in its concrete, tangible truth. There is actually no such thing; every philosophic proposition has been conclusively refuted by some other one, every scientific discovery has given place to another. To contemplate a great philosophic system, to see it working inevitably, relentlessly towards its appointed goal, branching out into infinite multiplicity of detail yet all the time preserving its basic unity, its ultimate purpose, is to experience as authentic and exquisite a thrill, as genuine and deep an aesthetic emotion, as any that we receive from a work of art. And the capacity to build up such a thought-structure differs in no essential manner from the capacity to create a great artistic masterpiece. To ask whether the proposition involved is 'true' or not would be just about as reasonable as to ask if a Bach fugue is 'true'.

In precisely the same way that a great intellectual

achievement gives us this indefinable sense of exaltation and satisfaction, quite apart from what it proves or demonstrates, so the work of art must convince us by virtue of its power of pure reasoning, by its absolute logic and inevitability. A *non sequitur* is as fatal in music as in metaphysics. The E major Fugue in the second book of Bach's *Forty-eight* is in its way as logical, as closely reasoned as the proposition in Spinoza's *Ethics* proving the existence of God by mathematical demonstration. There are thoughts and conceptions in art that are as abstract as there are thoughts and conceptions in philosophy which are almost aesthetic. Both art and pure thought work by different means to what are substantially the same end. They are complementary aspects of one interpenetrating, indivisible spiritual activity, and serve essentially the same purpose.

The fundamental error of all aesthetic, in fact, of all writings about art, lies in the supposition that it differs from other intellectual processes and activities: that there exist two modes of apprehension differing completely from each other, the one being called the intellective or reasoning faculty, of which philosophy is considered to be the highest manifestation, and the intuitive emotional faculty which

is exercised in art. Thinkers are either unable to perceive or unwilling to admit that not only is it possible to think as clearly, as logically, as deeply, in sound, line, or colour, as in words or mathematical formulae, but that it is necessary to do so if one is to achieve anything of the slightest value.

Musical sounds constitute an artistic medium which can no more be limited in its scope than the medium of words can. It contains within it equally wide possibilities of expression. In the same way that language can embody every possible variety of thought and experience, from a simple lyric by Herrick to the transcendental metaphysics of Kant or Hegel, so can music. The 'pure thought' which Mr. Shaw and Mr. Bax regard as the final phase and crowning glory of the human spirit can find utterance in music or in line just as well as in words or algebraic symbols. That the latter will supersede or render obsolete artistic expression is pure fallacy. Even if it were true—which it quite possibly is—that human thought throughout the ages tends constantly in the direction of greater abstraction, there is nothing in this to invalidate music as the means to embody it. In the same way that verbal expression originated, by all accounts, in poetry, and only ultimately developed the capa-



city for giving utterance to metaphysics and other abstractions in prose, so in music. And it is true enough that the larger part of the music written up to the present time has conformed to what we may call the 'poetic' type: appealing primarily to the senses and emotions rather than to the intellectual faculties. But such a thing as Bach's *Art of Fugue* is there to show us what music is capable of in the latter direction, and there can be little doubt that the future will witness an increasingly large number of efforts in this direction.

Needless to say, it does not necessarily follow that this abstract, intellectualized form of music is better, or worse, than what we have called above 'poetic' music, any more than we can say that Spinoza is greater, or less, than Shakespeare. They are simply different, that is all. Whatever developments the future has in store there is no reason to suppose that Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, will ever be excelled or superseded, but it is equally unreasonable to suppose that with them music has said everything that there is to be said, and that nothing so great can ever come again. Nothing as great of the same kind, that may be, but something entirely different is another matter.

The truth is that we shall not even begin to

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understand the first thing about the history of music, or of any other art, until we dismiss from our minds every vestige and trace of the belief that there is such a thing as progress or regress *per se* to be found in it. Wherever there seems to be a positive advance in some respect or other we shall always find it associated with a retrogression in another, and vice versa. There is only change, certain qualities disappearing or undergoing a diminution, and others appearing or becoming accentuated in their place, the one element compensating for the other. An immense expansion of technical resources, for example, is invariably accompanied by a loss of purely intellectual power; conversely, the greatest intellectual and formal achievements are seldom if ever accomplished by the great innovators.

No one epoch, then, is intrinsically greater than another; there are merely periods in which more great men happen to have been born than in others. The masterpiece of one age or school is in no wise superior or inferior to that of another age or school; they are only different. All great works are equal, because incomparable. Excellence is not relative but absolute. No period is good or bad in itself; there are only good and bad works, the latter always greatly predominating. The conceptions both of

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indefinite progress and unrelieved decadence are merely subjective and sentimental, corresponding to no reality, and it is difficult to decide which of the two is the more pathetically ridiculous: the critic who can see nothing in the great art of the past or present except stepping-stones towards some hypothetical goal in the future, or the critic for whom great art belongs to some past era and who can see nothing to admire in any art subsequent to the period of his predilection.

On the other hand, the third conception of musical history to which allusion has been made above, of a slow and painful ascent to a summit, and a subsequent inglorious decline, has something to be said for it, if only because it is the curve and rhythm of nature herself, and of all living things; from birth through youth, maturity, and old age, to death; of the day, from dawn through noon and evening, to night; of the year, from spring through summer and autumn, to winter. It is only reasonable to assume that the workings of this unescapable law will be found in some aspect or other in the world of art.

There is, indeed, nothing new in the idea that civilizations and their various forms of artistic expression pass through phases of growth and decay

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like living organisms. Oswald Spengler, so far from having originated it, was anticipated by Sir Flinders Petrie in his *Revolutions of Civilization*, and he in his turn by many passages in the writings of Goethe, Hegel, Vico, and Nietzsche, in which the conception is at least adumbrated, if not, perhaps, thought out to a conclusion or worked out systematically and in detail. For doing this in characteristically Teutonic fashion, even to the verge of the ridiculous, and sometimes beyond it, we are indebted to Spengler and his *Decline of the West*.

But the idea is even older than the nineteenth century, and has, in fact, probably always existed in some form or other. As Professor Petrie observes in the above-mentioned work: 'The analogy of the Great Year was familiar to the ancients; in the East, Berossos, the Babylonian, writes of the summer and winter of the Great Year; in the West the Etruscans also spoke of the Great Year as the period of each race of men that should arise in succession.' Indeed, so ancient and widespread is the belief that there is an intimate correspondence between the courses of nature and the history of a race or a civilization or a school of art, that it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the idea has a certain foundation in fact.

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It can be no mere coincidence, for example, that the art and literature of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries should be literally obsessed by the imagery of spring, and that the music of the period is also unmistakably vernal in feeling and atmosphere—as witness the famous *Reading Rota*, ‘Sumer is icumen in’, and the songs of the minstrels and troubadours—for it corresponds with a definite historic reality, seeing that it is from this period that the birth of modern civilization and culture must be dated, following on the long winter slumber of the early Middle Ages, and the long autumnal decline of the later days of the Roman Empire. Similarly the splendid and sumptuous art and civilization of the period beginning with the so-called Renaissance and ending with the eighteenth century clearly bears a more than symbolic relation to the summer season and the climacteric of the year; and the Romantic movement, with its predominating mood of nostalgic melancholy, its mellow beauty and opulent colouring, its deciduous quality and sense of over-ripeness, seems always to bear a close analogy to the season of consummation, fruition, and fulfilment, and to nature’s period of declension and decay. Is there not, moreover, to complete our analogy, a specifically wintry

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feeling about all that is most characteristically contemporaneous in modern art? To take music alone, which is the art with which we are here principally concerned, is there not something distinctively hibernial in, for example, the spiky acidulated utterances of the younger Frenchmen, in the morose and gloomy art of Honegger, in the choking yellow fogs of Schönbergian atonalism, in the clear-cut angularities, as of barren and leafless trees in frosty weather, of the cult of neo-classicism? Is not the central mood in the music of Sibelius, perhaps the greatest of actively creative composers still living, essentially that of a sombre and wintry gloom, as in the A minor Symphony, perhaps his greatest and certainly his most characteristic work? And does it not seem that there is something in the spiritual atmosphere and temperature of our epoch that renders difficult any further fruitful cultivation of the opulent, mellow art of our immediate predecessors, such as Strauss, Delius, Elgar, or Debussy, and withers and shrivels up any attempt at lyricism and emotional warmth? It is certainly true that where these latter qualities exist in a contemporary composer they are generally felt to be survivals from a past age, or something in the nature of carefully sheltered

hot-house growths, and this significantly bears out the analogy.

It is possible, however, to agree with all this, and to accept the implication that our modern culture and civilization have passed the climacteric of the Great Year, without necessarily mourning over the fact unduly. Every phase of existence has its beauty and significance. In the same way that there is a beauty of evening and night as well as of dawn and noontide; a beauty of old age and even of death as well as of youth and maturity; a beauty of autumn and winter as well as of spring and summer; a beauty of waste and desert places as well as of tropical luxuriance—so are there equal possibilities of aesthetic beauty and artistic achievement in any and all of the phases of the Great Year of a culture or a civilization. Even granting, in fact, that we of to-day are living in the final phase of a cultural period, in the winter, evening, old age, of a civilization, the possibility of great and enduring achievement is not thereby excluded. ‘Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? Think not of them, thou hast thy music too’, sings Keats in his *Ode to Autumn*, and there is no less a music of winter also.

We need not regret overmuch, then, the passing

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of the climacteric of our culture and civilization, if indeed it has passed, for every phase of the trajectory has a character of its own which it alone can fully express in art. In the same way that no one really, in his heart of hearts, would wish to go back and re-live any period of his youth or any other remote period of his life, so no true artist, but only a sentimental *pasticheur*, would wish to exchange his own age for any other past age, however glorious. We belong to our age, and our age belongs to us; it is part and parcel of us, and we could not escape from it even if we would. Granted that it is impossible for any composer to-day to rival Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven, there remain many things which we are able to do which they could not do, things that no one but we could do—things not necessarily greater, not necessarily less great, but merely different.



### III. THE SEQUENCE OF THE ARTS

**I**N the introductory chapter it was observed that the Millennium constituted a turning-point in the history of the modern world. Before that date art, culture, civilization, were to all seeming dead; after it they came gradually to life once more.

The first art to awaken from its slumber was unquestionably architecture, with the miraculous efflorescence of the Gothic style, of which the central date is round about 1100. The next to revive, as one would naturally expect, in view of its close connexion with architecture, was sculpture; in the north with the great anonymous masters of the French cathedrals such as Chartres; in the south in Italy, with the Pisano family, the first of whom, Niccola (1206-78), is generally recognized to-day as the first individual artist in whose work can be detected the first quickening of the new birth or renaissance of the plastic arts.

In due course the new impulse communicated itself to painting; the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries are pre-eminently the great age of pictorial art, particularly in Italy, with the great hierarchy from Giotto to Titian. The leading

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art of the later Renaissance and the ensuing period is beyond question literature. There is no one in the domains of the other arts, however great his personal achievement, who can compare with Shakespeare, Cervantes, Racine, to name only three. The great age of literature lasts until the eighteenth century, towards the end of which music begins to come forward into the leading place; the nineteenth is pre-eminently the great age of music.

So here we find a definite sequence, starting from the eleventh century; first architecture attains to maturity and supremacy over the other arts, then sculpture, then painting, then the various literary arts, and finally music. It need hardly be said, of course, that this so-called supremacy of one or other of the various art-forms at different periods does not in any way preclude the highest possible achievements in the other art-forms at the same time, but merely that at any given period there is one art in particular which best expresses or embodies the values of the period; the corollary is that, during the period of the ascendancy of one particular art, the other arts aspire towards the aesthetic ideals embodied in that leading art. The *Divina Commedia* of Dante, for example, which belongs to an age in which architectural and to some extent also

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sculptural values were paramount, is none the less a supreme masterpiece, in no wise inferior to the greatest contemporary achievements of the architects themselves; but it is itself like a vast Gothic cathedral. As I have already said in the first chapter of *A Survey of Contemporary Music*,

‘so precise are Dante’s indications, and even his measurements, that we could almost build his *Inferno* or *Purgatorio* from them. We are told in the latter, for example, that the breadth of each staircase is about eighteen feet; that the steps leading from one cornice to another are like those which go up from Florence to San Miniato and that the sculptures on the floors are carven like tombstones, and so on. Beatrice herself seems not a living figure at all, but more like a carven angel with wings folded crosswise on her breast, and the grotesque evocations of the *Inferno* are more like the gargoyles on Notre-Dame than human beings.’

Similarly, it is interesting to note, Father d’Arcy, S.J., in his study of St. Thomas Aquinas, the great philosopher of the period, observes that his system is built up like a Gothic cathedral.

In the same way the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer, which belong to the age of the supremacy of painting, are above all pictorial in conception and treatment, as I have already observed in the book

mentioned above, 'reminding one irresistibly of the sumptuous procession of Bennozzo Gozzoli in the Palazzo Ricardi in Florence, winding its way through a dream-like landscape, and full of wonderful living portraits and feeling for natural beauty. Similarly the Decameron conjures up before one the gracious flower-like men and women of such painters as Piero della Francesca and Signorelli.'

In the succeeding age, as already suggested, the predominant values are those of literature, and all the other arts aspire towards their embodiment. The pictorial arts tend to become literary, psychological, anecdotal, in their aim; Hogarth, for example, paints novels. Similarly, it is no coincidence that the form to which the composers of that age were most strongly drawn should have been that of opera or oratorio. The *nuova musica* of Peri and Caccini and the art of Monteverdi were in essence little more than attempts to make music perform the task of words, and were the direct outcome of literary ideals and inspirations. Even for Gluck, coming at the end of this literary period, the chief function of music was merely to intensify the poetry and express the dramatic situation of the libretto. The entire musical aesthetic of the period, indeed, seeks to reduce music to the position of humble handmaid

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to the written and spoken word. We are apt to forget that Mozart even, whom we habitually regard as the pure musician *par excellence*, was primarily a composer of operas, and indeed regarded himself as such. We see clearly from his correspondence and utterances that only the force of circumstances prevented him from devoting his entire time and energy to the production of works for the stage. In 1778, for example, we find him writing to his father as follows: 'You know my greatest longing—to write operas,' and again, later: 'I have an unspeakable desire to write another opera—if I only hear an opera mentioned, if I only go inside a theatre and hear them tuning up, I am quite beside myself—I am envious of everyone who writes an opera, I could positively cry with vexation whenever I hear or see an *aria*.' And it remains indisputable that Mozart, pure musician though he was in a sense, lives for us to-day primarily by virtue of his operas. Other composers besides him have written great symphonies, chamber music, masses, oratorios, sonatas; but

'he is the only musician who has created living human beings with his music, fit to rank with the creations of a Cervantes, a Shakespeare, a Molière. This rare quality of Mozart's cannot be ascribed to his librettos which,

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viewed apart from the music, are singularly devoid of dramatic characterization. He achieved through notes what his great literary contemporaries achieved through words. His Figaro, for example, owes nothing to the librettist, not even to Beaumarchais, with whose creation indeed it is in strong contrast in most essential respects; and his *Don Giovanni* can be placed side by side and compared in detail with the *Don Juan* of Molière or *El Burlador de Sevilla* of Tirso de Molina.' (Op. cit.)

And so with the succeeding age and the so-called romantic movement: neither the consummate literary achievements of the nineteenth century in England, nor the splendid hierarchy of the great French painters from Delacroix and Ingres to Cézanne and Van Gogh, can alter the fact that, collectively speaking, music is the archetypal art of the period—the medium which, better than any other, realizes or embodies the characteristic aims and ideals of the age, and which alone could adequately express them. We have only to look at the other arts themselves to see this clearly enough. The German romantics such as Tieck, Novalis, and Hoffmann were all literally obsessed with music and musical imagery, and Schiller declared that he always sat down to write in a musical mood. In the eyes of the leading German philosophers of the period,

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such as Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel, music was considered to be the highest of the arts, and for Schopenhauer the very world itself was 'embodied music'. Nietzsche, in many respects the greatest thinker and writer of his age in Germany, considered himself more a musician than a writer; alternately the closest friend and bitterest antagonist of Wagner, he found in music the most significant index to the spirit of his age.

In France this musical tendency is to be found more highly developed in the later phases of the literature of the nineteenth century than in the earlier. Baudelaire, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Mallarmé, Verlaine, all consciously adopted music as their aesthetic ideal. As Mr. Arthur Symonds has said: 'Carry the theories of Mallarmé to a practical conclusion, multiply his powers in a direct ratio, and you have Wagner.' His poetic creed was that the greatest poem is that which in its final achievement becomes a perfect music; that of Verlaine, 'De la musique avant toute chose . . . et tout le reste est littérature.' But the characteristic common to all the great writers of the romantic movement, early or late, French, German, English or any other nationality, is

'the sense of the musical values of words, the growing

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preoccupation with sonority, with problems of rhyme and rhythm, with trains of thought suggested by chance analogies of sound rather than conditioned by any logical necessity, which eventually grew to such a pitch that in many modern writers of such wholly divergent tendencies as Swinburne and Mallarmé we find pages of almost orchestral sound signifying nothing. Words tend to lose their precise meaning and come to possess an almost symbolical significance, grammatical structure becomes lax, moods are evoked rather than realities, things are suggested rather than described, verse melts into verse like wave into wave, and its music takes precedence of its literal meaning.' (Op. cit.).

We find precisely the same processes at work in the domain of the plastic arts. Delacroix, to quote the words of Baudelaire, 'à mieux traduit qu'aucun autre l'invisible, l'impalpable, le rêve, les nerfs, l'âme — Delacroix est le plus suggestif de tous les peintres'—in a word he is the most musical of painters. The same is just as true of most of the impressionists and so-called post-impressionists as of the romantics. Camille Mauclair, for example, in his *L'Impressionisme*, points out a fact which is sufficiently self-evident, one would have thought, namely that Monet aims at achieving almost musical effects. Whistler with his nocturnes, symphonies, and so forth need hardly be mentioned in this connexion—the musi-



cality of his conceptions goes very much further than the mere nomenclature he adopted for some of his canvases. Gauguin, apart from the patently musical quality of his own painting, said, 'Soyez persuadés que la peinture colorée entre dans une phase musicale. Cézanne, pour citer un ancien, semble être un élève de César Franck. Il joue du grand orgue constamment, ce qui me faisait dire qu'il était polyphone.' It is perhaps not altogether complimentary to the great master of Aix to liken him to César Franck, and his colour to that most detestable of all instruments, the organ, but the intention of Gauguin's simile, and its underlying rightness, is unquestionable. Again Van Gogh, writing to Gauguin, expressed his ideal as follows: 'faire de la peinture ce qu'est déjà devant nous la musique de Berlioz et de Wagner.'

It is a commonplace, moreover, that almost the whole non-representational movement in modern painting owes its inspiration to the sister art of music; its very practitioners not merely admit it, but proudly avow it. All the more recent manifestations of pictorial art, indeed, such as futurism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, are all so many attempts to achieve the ends of music through the means of painting, and are only explicable as such.

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The fact that their spokesmen and apologists and admirers continually employ musical terms to express the qualities of their work—orchestration, modulation, rhythm, harmony, melody, and so on—is not a mere affectation, but a necessity: musical terms are the only ones that are suited to the purpose. Much of the later work of Rodin, again, consists of endeavours, mostly unsuccessful, to render in the recalcitrant medium of stone the intangible abstractions and spiritual realities proper to music. When Walter Pater gave utterance to his celebrated dictum to the effect that all art aspires towards the condition of music he was certainly right in so far as the art of his own time was concerned. M. Jules Benda, the eminent French publicist, describes the tendency we have been examining as ‘the musicalization of the arts’. That music is the art of arts during the nineteenth century is beyond question.

This sequence of artistic supremacies through the centuries, beginning with architecture and ending with music, was first worked out by the present writer in *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, and many of the illustrations brought forward have been reproduced in the foregoing pages. But it was not until some years later that the full significance of the phenomenon was brought home to him on

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reading for the first time the *Revolutions of Civilization* of Professor Flinders Petrie, to which allusion has already been made in the preceding chapter. In that work the thesis is put forward that the arts tend to succeed each other in a certain definite order, in respect of relative maturity and supremacy over the others, at different phases of the Great Year (see p. 52) of a culture or civilization, each taking the lead in turn. He is able to show, moreover, that the phenomenon is not found merely in modern European art, but is of universal incidence. Starting from the years A.D. 1240, 450 B.C., and 1550 B.C. as 'zero hours', so to speak, of modern European civilization, classical Greece, and ancient Egypt respectively, he postulates in each case the emergence and supremacy over all the other arts firstly of sculpture, then after a more or less uniform lapse of time, of painting, then of literature: the sequence being then completed in each case by the ascendancy of non-artistic activities such as mechanics, science, wealth, this last being the concluding phase of a culture.

It is exceedingly curious, incidentally, that Petrie should have omitted to take into account the arts of architecture and music, which, as we have seen, fit perfectly into the sequence in modern times,

completing it; and it is more than probable that if we possessed sufficient data they would be found to fit perfectly into that both of ancient Greece and ancient Egypt. It is certainly remarkable that, at precisely the time when we should expect, in accordance with our theory, to find a predominance of music over all the other arts in ancient Egypt, archaeology lends striking confirmation to the probability by adducing the fact that the largest and most complex harps that have been discovered in the tombs—six and a half feet high, and with twenty-six strings—have been conjecturally ascribed to that time, i.e. about 1000 B.C. Similarly, although authentic specimens of Greek music have not survived in sufficient quantity for us to be able to assess the relative merits of its different periods, or to compare the degree of its accomplishment with that attained contemporaneously in the sister arts, there can be little doubt, judging from circumstantial literary evidence, that the greatest efflorescence of musical art in Greece fits into the period immediately following that of literature; for it was only in this period that music came to be considered as an independent art instead of, as hitherto, merely a subsidiary and exceedingly humble branch of poetry.

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Petrie does not attempt to deal with the great oriental civilizations at all; the necessary data are in many cases lacking. The present writer's knowledge of the subject is, to put it mildly, unequal to the task, but by piecing together the statements made by acknowledged authorities on their various special subjects, he has been able to ascertain that a similar broad ground-plan can be laid out in the case of China, at least; for example, it was under the Han and a few subsequent minor dynasties that, so far as can be ascertained—for the evidence is scarce—the architecture of ancient China reached its highest pitch of development—the Great Wall, for instance, belongs to that period. In the succeeding Wei period, according to the most reliable authorities, is to be found the finest Chinese sculpture. In the following T'ang period, divided into Early, Glorious, and Late, we find firstly the culminating point of Chinese painting, then that of poetry. We do not know enough about Chinese music to say definitely that it was in the subsequent Sung period that it reached its apogee, but it is at least a remarkable coincidence that a school of painting should have existed during that period which bears a marked resemblance to our Western Impressionist school, which was contemporaneous with our highest

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musical development, and, as we have seen, expresses primarily musical values. Compare, for example, the following description of the leading characteristics of the Sung school of painting, given by Soulié de Morant in his *Histoire de l'art chinois*, with that of Delacroix by Baudelaire (see p. 64): 'inspiration rêveuse, brouillards transparents, clair de lune, évocation, mais non décoration — la composition vise moins à la décoration qu'à l'expression d'une émotion — une certaine mélancolie rêveuse les anime tout.' Considering that the law is to be found in operation with regard to all the other arts in ancient China, it seems reasonable to suppose that it will be found to apply to music also. Finally, the ensuing Mongol period, which was one of decadence and eclipse in all the arts, corresponds with the final phase of a culture, as indicated by Petrie.

This orderly sequence of the arts, which is thus clearly revealed in the art-history of modern Europe, medieval China, ancient Greece, and primitive Egypt, and perhaps of many other cultures, possibly even of all if one only possessed the necessary data to establish it, is not merely the reverse of arbitrary, but is a fundamentally natural one if we look at it closely. In ancient Greek aesthetic the arts were divided into two trinities; the arts of space, com-

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prising architecture, sculpture, and painting, on the one hand, and the arts of time, comprising poetry, music, and dance on the other—and this logical classification gives us the very order in which, as we have seen, the arts come successively to maturity and supremacy in the history of a culture. To-day, incidentally, we do not ordinarily include dancing in the category of the fine arts; but even if we do, it will be found to fit perfectly into the sequence, in modern times at least, and possibly also in ancient Greece. It is certainly beyond question that the present age has witnessed an immense revival of the art of dancing, following, as we have seen, on the heels of a musical period; and there are assuredly many people who would claim for ballet that it is the leading and most significant art-form of the present time. Every one would at least admit that it is the most typical in many respects. We might, I think, agree to include dancing as one of the phenomena accompanying the final stage of a culture—the characteristic art-expression of the period of mechanics, science, and wealth postulated by Petrie.

Again, the sequence corresponds very closely with the classification adopted by Hegel in his *Philosophy of Fine Art*; the only difference being that Hegel puts music next in order to painting, and

poetry last in the sequence as representing the most typically romantic of the arts. We need not hesitate to conclude with absolute confidence that the German thinker was here in error. It is only natural and very pardonable that he should have been, for at the time his formidable treatise was written (it was published in 1835) the romantic potentialities of music could hardly have been realized in spite of Weber and his *Freischütz*. I doubt whether Hegel was even acquainted with any music later than Mozart at the time when he was writing, or at least conceiving, his work—at any rate there is no trace of it.

But apart from Greek and Hegelian theory, the sequence is clearly a natural and plausible one in practice. It is not even necessary to conceive of architecture as the 'first' art; there is certainly a suggestion of artificiality in such a notion. But if we conceive the sequence as constituting not a straight line but a closed circle, a wheel, it will be observed that there is a definite relation between the various adjacent arts. Attention has already been called to the close relationship existing between architecture and sculpture. The earliest sculpture serves an architectural function, and only subsequently attains to aesthetic independence and auto-



nomy. The greatest sculptors have often been architects and vice versa, and a similarly close nexus links up sculpture with the sister art of painting. The connexion is so close and obvious here that it is not worth labouring; nor is it necessary to point out how often we find the faculty for both developed in the same artist. The literary or verbal arts self-evidently stand midway between the plastic and pictorial arts on the one hand and music on the other: part of their natural function being, in common with painting, the depiction of reality and natural objects—landscapes, persons, ‘things that you may touch or see’—and part, in emulation of music, being the exploitation of the sensuous and sonorous potentialities of language—to say nothing of their intimate association or collaboration in song and music drama. As for the close relationship between music and architecture, it has long been recognized. It was Friedrich Schlegel, I think, who was responsible for the celebrated dictum to the effect that architecture is ‘frozen music’, but it would be equally true to say of music in certain of its aspects that it is melted or thawed architecture. Similarly dancing, if it is to be brought into the circle, has obvious affinities, not with architecture admittedly, but with sculpture. Sculpture, you

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might say, in imitation of Schlegel, is frozen dancing: dancing is molten sculpture.

Together with this affinity between the adjacent arts in the circle, there is a strong antipathy between those at opposite sides of the circumference to each other: between, for example, literature and architecture, music and sculpture—they are antitheses. Whereas one often finds the practice of adjacent arts combined in one and the same artist, one seldom encounters the combination of the non-adjacent ones. Michael Angelo is the only example one can think of in whom are united eminence as an architect and distinction as a poet; Leonardo da Vinci the only one who was both sculptor and musician. But even this latter instance is subject to qualification. Leonardo's interest in music was no greater than that which he had in everything under the sun; and from the little we know of his musical activities it would appear that it was the scientific and acoustical side of the art, rather than the purely aesthetic side, that interested him.

Of artistic dualism in the adjacent arts, there are, of course, innumerable examples. William Blake, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and to-day Mr. Wyndham Lewis, are three native artists who have won equal distinction in the fields of both literature and paint-

ing—with the unfortunate result for them, incidentally, that they are all regarded as painters by literary critics, and as writers by art critics, in spite of the fact that their achievement in the one direction is no less than in the other. But the world mistrusts versatility above all things. Eminence in one direction is already hard enough to forgive, but to achieve it in two or more is positively unpardonable. The same fate has been that of Berlioz, one of the greatest musicians of all time, who has often been called a 'literary' musician solely on account of his possessing a great additional talent for writing. But while there are several other instances in history of the combination of literary and musical talent in the same individual—Wagner, Schumann, and Grétry are other musicians who have shown a certain modest talent for literature, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau and E. T. A. Hoffmann are writers who have also had some aptitude for music—it is distinctly surprising, in view of the close affinity between music and architecture in several respects, that no striking instance of pre-eminence in both spheres should as yet have appeared. The nearest approach to it is to be found in Bach, which is only what one would have expected, in view of the recognizably architectonic quality of much of his

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music. It is recorded of him by Forkel, his first biographer, that 'when he was in Berlin he was shown the new opera house. At the very first glance he observed everything that was good or bad in the non-musical aspects of the building, which others had only discovered from experience. He was taken into the great dining-room, went into the circumambient gallery, looked at the ceiling and said straight away that the architect, perhaps without being aware of it, had accomplished a remarkable feat of virtuosity: namely, that when someone spoke softly against the wall in one corner of the gallery in the oblong room, anyone who stood above the arch in the opposite corner, with his face turned to the wall, could hear the words distinctly, although they were inaudible to anyone else in the room, either in the middle or at any other place in it. This effect came from the form and position of the arches on the ceiling, the peculiar disposition of which he had detected at the very first glance.' It is more than probable, in fact, that if Bach's circumstances and environment had been different, and his opportunities greater, he would have been as great an architect as he was a musician.

To revert to the main argument of this chapter: we have seen how, starting from the Millennium

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or zero hour of modern European civilization, a predominantly architectural period was followed by a sculptural one, then by a pictorial one, then by a literary one, then by a musical one; and how, thanks to Professor Flinders Petrie, this artistic progression finds a parallel in other civilizations and cultures. At the conclusion of this sequence (Petrie, it will be remembered, begins with sculpture and stops short at literature—we have completed it with architecture and music), there invariably occurs an epoch of comparative artistic sterility characterized by mechanics, science and plutocracy, together with dancing as its chief aesthetic expression—with which the life of the culture ends. And here again we find a remarkable parallel, for it would be idle to deny that these are precisely the characteristics of the present epoch. It might well seem to follow, therefore, that the pessimistic forebodings of Hegel, Spengler, and others, recorded in the preceding chapter, were justified, and that the present era is a predominantly inartistic one; that, in the words of Spengler, ‘the bitter conclusion is that it is all irretrievably over with the arts of form of the West’. Well, it probably is so; everything, both theory and experience, points to the truth of this diagnosis—except for one word of it, ‘irretrievably’. It is no

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doubt true that the present is the most inartistic epoch in modern history. Who, looking around him, could deny it? All that is most typical and representative of the age in art is characterized by the qualities enumerated above—it is the art of a scientific, materialistic, machinistic, plutocratic, terpsichorean age. The art of a Hindemith, a Prokofiev, a Stravinsky, a Honegger, is palpably vitiated by these characteristics of the present *Zeitgeist*; and it is equally true of all the other arts. The mistake lies in the assumption of irretrievability, of finality. Apart from the fact that this pessimistic diagnosis is only a generalization and consequently does not exclude the possible appearance of great individual exceptions—many of the greatest names in the history of art are those of men in conflict with the spirit of their respective ages—there are signs that this state of affairs is passing, or is about to pass. After all, it has already lasted for half a century and more; it cannot go on for ever. The characteristically Teutonic myopia of a Spengler—in lesser degree of a Hegel—is unable to see ahead. The admitted fact that the wheel has come full circle does not necessarily imply that it will turn no more, that because there is an end there will be no fresh beginning. And precisely at the present time one

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can perceive clear signs of a new beginning. After a period of continual, unrelieved decline lasting for many centuries the art of architecture appears to-day to be entering upon a new lease of life, emerging out of the phase of 'mechanics, science and wealth' which is our own age. It has already begun, in fact; great buildings—American sky-scrapers and the Palace of the Soviets are two conspicuous examples—unquestionably constitute the most important and significant art-expression of the present day. In precisely the same way, it is interesting to note, the phase of artistic sterility in China which coincided with the Mongol dynasty gave way during the succeeding Ming dynasty to a triumphant renaissance of architecture, followed by another great sculptural period. Similarly, the phase of artistic sterility which coincided with the downfall of Rome at the beginning of the fifth century was preceded by a magnificent musical efflorescence in the form of the plain-chant of the Church, in the fourth century, and was succeeded by the great architectural impulse which found its completest and most perfect expression in the church of S. Sophia in Constantinople.

The conclusions to which this chapter leads may be briefly summed up as follows. A kind of cycle

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of the arts has been postulated, based upon historical observations and analogies, in accordance with which each of the major arts takes the lead, as it were, in a definite order, and imposes its peculiar values in greater or lesser degree upon the other arts. Hence, it was shown, music was the archetypal art of the romantic movement and the nineteenth century, the form of art to which all the other arts continually aspired. This is no longer so. It would seem as certain as anything can be that the long period of the aesthetic ascendancy of music—Jules Benda's 'musicalization of the arts'—and its proud role of lawgiver and pace-maker to the other arts is for the time being irrevocably at an end. Leaving aside for the moment all personal prepossessions and prejudices, it would be idle to deny that it was the music of Wagner which was the fullest and completest expression of the age and of the German romantic movement. Similarly, it was Berlioz, not Victor Hugo or any of the other great French writers of the period, who best exemplified and realized the ideals of the French romantic movement. But towards the end of the century all this changes. Neither Strauss nor Debussy has influenced the minds of their artistic contemporaries to anything like the same extent, or even to any considerable



extent at all; in so far as Stravinsky has done so it has only been in the role of a choreographic musician, the writer of music for ballets. Music, in short, has lost the lead, has been deposed from her temporary position of sovereignty over the other arts, and will not recapture it until the revolution of another cycle in the far distant future.

If this conclusion is correct, our view of the immediate future of music must necessarily be a pessimistic one, but only in a strictly limited sense. That it does not inevitably, or even probably, exclude greatness of achievement is shown by many of the examples adduced earlier in the chapter. For instance, if a predominantly architectural age can produce a poet of the stature of Dante, or a predominantly literary age a musician of the stature of Mozart, there is obviously no need for us to worry unduly about the future. On the contrary, one might say with justice that Mozart was as great an artist as any of the purely literary figures of his age, if not greater. In the same way, the aesthetic predominance of music in the last century did not preclude the great achievement of innumerable writers, and of a school of painting equal to the greatest that has ever existed. It is more than likely, indeed, that Cézanne was individually a greater

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artist than Wagner, in spite of the fact that music was the dominating art of the period and the one which dictated, as it were, the values and aesthetic principles of the painters, including, as we have seen, Cézanne himself.

To-day, in conformity with Professor Petrie's theory, and with observable fact, we are living in an age dominated by anti-artistic activities such as mechanics, science, and wealth, and contemporary art in general reflects these phenomena only too faithfully; but already we see clearly emerging from it a new phase of more purely artistic activity in which architecture, as in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, is once more the dominant factor. It follows that in the immediate future all the arts, to adopt Walter Pater's dictum, will aspire towards the condition of architecture. Consequently the values which will most probably characterize the music of the immediate future will be architectural values.

#### IV. THE ARTISTIC SUPREMACY OF RACES

IN the foregoing chapter it was pointed out that whereas examples of creative dualism in what we called the adjacent arts is fairly frequent and common, it is exceedingly rare to find it in arts at the opposite side to each other of the circumference of the circle. It is, for example, impossible to think of a single instance in which the plastic (sculptural or pictorial) faculties have been combined with the musical in a single personality to any great creative extent; and, with the solitary exception of Michael Angelo, of one who simultaneously excelled in literature and architecture. It is interesting to note that the same law holds good with regard to nations, subject, as we shall see, to certain qualifications.

In *The History of Music* the present writer has sought to show that

‘a race such as the Greeks, whose outlook was primarily intellectual and logical, and whose peculiar strength lay in the direction of clarity and definition, must inevitably find its most complete and congenial artistic expression in the visual arts, and particularly in sculpture. It is at least certain that the ideas and conceptions

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which are most characteristic of the Greek spirit, in art, in life and in thought, are precisely the opposite to those which are best suited to musical expression. To the remote, the mysterious, the subjective, the most typical representatives of the Hellenic spirit always evinced an antagonism and a repulsion amounting almost to horror. That the Greeks wholly failed to recognize, or chose to neglect, the peculiar aptitudes possessed by music as a medium of artistic expression can be seen from the fact that they regarded it as a mere branch of literature, a ῥηθυσμα, or "seasoning" of poetry.' (Op. cit.)

It was considered to be a part of the poet's training to be able to set his own verses to music in the same way that to-day, for example, Mr. W. B. Yeats, who self-confessedly knows nothing about and cares nothing for music, is in the habit of inventing a vocal line for the recitation of his verses. It was only in later times that music came to be considered by the Greeks as an art which might conceivably have a separate existence apart from literature, and this development, it is significant to learn, was regarded by their greatest thinkers as a mark of decadence, as it no doubt was from their point of view.

There is every reason to suppose, therefore—and, in fact, it is almost certain—that even if authentic examples of Greek music of the best period had been preserved, we should find them very disappointing.

Everything points to the conclusion that the Greeks were a fundamentally unmusical race, and this was their strength just as much as it was their weakness. The qualities which made for their incontestable greatness in one direction automatically militated against their achievement in its opposite direction. The Greek genius, in a word, was centred in the spatial as opposed to the temporal arts, and especially in sculpture, which was their key-art, so to speak. When writers, then, lament the fact that no important examples of Greek music have survived, on the grounds that the Greek achievement in architecture, sculpture, and possibly painting, was so high that their music must likewise have been of a correspondingly high development, it is as if one were to suggest that because an artist is a super-eminent sculptor or architect, it necessarily follows that he must also be an excellent composer. But it is no more true in the former case than in the latter.

Throughout the greater part of her history, ancient Greece maintained a consistently anti-musical, pro-plastic bias, and the same is probably true, on the whole, of Rome, in so far as Rome was actively creative in any art—i.e. music was regarded, not as a creative art, but simply as a ‘seasoning’ of literature or else a mere sensual diversion.

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It is not until the advent of the Christian era, as the present writer has attempted to show in *The History of Music*, that music rises to a position not merely of equality with, but of supremacy to, the other arts. And it will always be found that at whatever time and in whatever place one finds the classical, pagan values paramount, so one finds the plastic arts in a position of superiority to music; whenever and wherever one finds the romantic, Christian values in the ascendant, one finds that music is raised to a place of honour among the arts.

In this sense, and in this sense only, is it possible to speak of musical and unmusical races or countries. In modern times, however, no country has been so consistently anti-musical and pro-plastic in its bias as Greece. France is the nearest approach to Greece in this respect among the modern nations of Europe, and hence it is that of all the larger civilized nations her positive contribution to music has been the smallest in proportion to her achievement in other directions. Her sole important contributions to music, it will be noticed, were made during the few periods in her history when the medieval or romantic values were in the ascendant.

In general the law will be found to hold good that nations, when they do excel in both directions of the

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visual and auditory, spatial and temporal arts, do so at different periods of their history; when the one is strong, the other is weak, and vice versa, and no better example of this can be found than is afforded by a comparative study of the arts in France. French painting and French music, indeed, exhibit precisely the contrary course of development through the centuries.

The customary experience of a visitor to an exhibition of a national school of painting, exhibited chronologically, is that of an anti-climax in the last rooms, which are customarily devoted to recent or contemporary activities; with the school of French painting alone has one the sense of a long, gradual crescendo, ending with a triumphant climax. It evolves from modest beginnings, undistinguished indeed, in comparison with those of the Italian, Flemish, or even German schools, and concludes with the magnificent efflorescence of genius which began with Delacroix and Ingres and ends only in modern times—if, indeed, it can be said to be ended yet.

When we turn to French music we find precisely the contrary development. French music, in fact, exhibits the curious phenomenon of attaining to its highest point in early times, in the late Middle Ages

and subsequently declining in a long, gradual diminuendo which the sudden, terrific sforzando that signals the advent of Berlioz only serves to accentuate and intensify; and even so, in recent centuries a quite strikingly large proportion of France's most eminent composers—the majority, indeed—have been foreigners. Lulli, Cherubini, and Spontini were Italians, Grétry and César Franck were Belgians, Gluck was an Austrian, Meyerbeer and Offenbach were cosmopolitan Jews. And while the chronological sequence of items in a concert programme devoted to a national school of music usually coincides with a growth of interest and a sense of climax, the opposite is true in the case of France—as was well shown, indeed, by the series of concerts given as a kind of musical accompaniment to the exhibition a few years ago of French paintings at Burlington House, the programmes of which started off magnificently with Pérotin le Grand, and ended ignominiously with Poulenc le Petit—a pathetic anti-climax.

This striking contrast in development between the two arts in France is no mere coincidence. There is, on the contrary, a very good reason for it as I have sought to show, namely, that there is the same innate antagonism and irreconcilability between the



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musical and pictorial faculties of a nation as there is in individual artists. Ancient France particularly excelled in Gothic architecture and in cathedral music, modern France in painting and in literature. It is no mere chance that her two greatest composers in modern times, Berlioz and Debussy, despite the immense differences between them, should have been so frequently occupied with pictorial and literary conceptions in their music. Needless to say, this circumstance in itself does not necessarily impair the pure *musicality* of their respective talents any more than it did in the case of Mozart. Berlioz in fact, is no more, and no less, of a 'literary' musician than Mozart is. In other words, he frequently gave musical embodiment to literary conceptions and achieved by means of notes what others achieved by means of words, but that only means that he was the product of a literary-minded race in the same way that Mozart was the product of a literary-minded age. This circumstance coloured their respective talents and to some extent gave them their direction, but it did not influence or determine their specifically musical nature. Music, we have seen, can be architectural in an age of architecture, pictorial in an age of painting, literary in an age of literature, but that does not mean that it is thereby

any the less musical in essence; any more than the poetry of Dante is the less poetic for possessing some of the attributes of architecture, or the painting of Cézanne less purely plastic for possessing some of the attributes of music. Indeed, it is a strange paradox that Dante should commonly be regarded as the purest of poets, Mozart as the purest of musicians, and Cézanne as the purest of painters. So also should it be with Berlioz. Indeed, in the opinion of Mr. Bernard van Dieren,

‘Berlioz was, with the sole exception of Mozart, the composer with the most stupendous native gifts of the last few centuries. . . . He did not depend on literary implications. From a Shakespearian scene, for instance, he sucked all the music. We may feel deeply moved by twenty lines of Shakespeare, but how could the words in ordinary use from which they are made up, be moving? It is the hidden music in them that makes it so. Berlioz gives us this, and as pure music that stands by its own merits. He does not make a scenario of the love-scene from *Romeo and Juliet*; he finds the hidden music behind it. That is the work of genius as it would be of the man who loves a woman and reveals her loveliness to others in a musical structure whose qualities derive from the intensity of his emotions.’

But this is a digression; let us revert to the main argument, which was that at any given time a nation, like a culture or civilization or an individual, excels

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in music in inverse ratio to the extent to which it excels in the direction of the plastic arts, and vice versa. France was shown to be a striking illustration of this, but she is by no means an isolated example. On the contrary it is an ascertainable fact of well-nigh universal applicability.

Germany, for example (in which we may include Teutonic Austria for purposes of convenience), by universal consent the most musical nation of comparatively recent times, has produced less first-rate plastic and pictorial art than any other great country during the period of her musical supremacy; but at the time when she gave birth to such painters as Grünewald, Cranach, Dürer, and Holbein, her music was virtually non-existent.

Similarly Italy did not achieve eminence as a musical country until precisely the time at which her pictorial art had entered upon its decadence. The composers who were contemporaries of her great school of painting, from roughly 1350 to 1550, were without exception insignificant; her first great composer, Palestrina, did not make his appearance until after Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian. Italy's great musical period, lasting with only brief intermissions from 1600 or so up to the present day, has been accompanied by a striking

dearth of great painters and sculptors; there is hardly one during all these three hundred years and more who is worthy to be compared in stature either with the great painters and sculptors of the preceding age, or with their great musical contemporaries.

Even England illustrates precisely the same principle. She is now universally admitted by musical scholars to have led Europe in the earliest developments of harmonic art in the dark ages, and correspondingly produced no painting or sculpture of any value—her primitives are the least important of any national school, even less so than the French. England's musical productivity lasted without serious interruption until the beginning of the eighteenth century—an exceptionally long period—and during the whole of that time no really outstanding pictorial or sculptural artist made his appearance in this country. It was only in the eighteenth century, when the musical impulse was beginning to wane, that English painting began to develop; and it achieved its highest development with Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Lawrence, Constable, and Turner at precisely the moment when her music reached its absolute nadir, in the second part of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries.

These facts, incidentally, go to show that there is no such thing as a musical or unmusical, pictorial or unpictorial race *per se*. Any critic or historian writing of France in the early Middle Ages, without knowledge of subsequent developments, would have had good reason for saying that France was the most musical country in Europe and the least gifted as regards the plastic arts; in the nineteenth and twentieth (so far as it has gone) centuries precisely the contrary would seem to be true, namely, that France is the most richly gifted nation in the modern world in respect of painting and sculpture, and at the same time the least musical of the great nations in Europe. Similarly, any one writing in the fourteenth, fifteenth, or sixteenth centuries would have naturally concluded that, whereas England was one of the most musical countries in the world, if not the most musical of all—Germany was the least: and he would to all appearances have been thoroughly justified in applying to her the contemptuous phrase she has applied to us in recent times—*das Land ohne Musik*—for until the advent of Heinrich Schütz at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Germany had not produced a single composer of note, with the possible exception of Hans Leo Hassler, and even he was a foreign member of the

Venetian school rather than an independent Teutonic master.

It is possible to trace an interesting and suggestive sequence in the incidence of national supremacy in music. Mr. Cecil Forsyth, in his study of *Music and Nationalism*, observed the fact that great achievement in music has nearly always manifested itself in inverse ratio to the degree of political power and influence wielded by a nation: that the countries which have contributed most to the history of music have done so at periods when they were least significant politically. He consequently propounds the thesis that 'As soon as a nation begins to extend and exteriorize itself it ceases to develop its musical, though not necessarily its other artistic, faculties'. Sea-power in particular he finds adverse to musical development, and he finds the explanation of England's musical negligibility in modern times in her vast overseas Empire and her material, economic preoccupations. It is certainly true that a study of history lends striking confirmation to this theory. The only notable exception to it one can find is afforded by Spain, which produced her greatest musicians such as Victoria, Morales, and Guerrero at precisely the time of her greatest political ascendancy. But it was a short-lived efflorescence, and the

rapidity of its passing—for Spain became a musical wilderness at the death of Victoria—suggests that this isolated phenomenon was simply an unnatural freak and therefore tends to support Mr. Forsyth's conclusions.

Further support for them is to be found in an interesting observation made by Professor Flinders Petrie in his suggestive little book to which reference has already been made several times in the foregoing pages: 'the order of Roman influence was Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany, and this is the order of political power of these countries in the last few centuries.' Musical developments, on the contrary, it is interesting to observe, have been, not exactly perhaps, but roughly in the opposite direction, contrary to the order of Roman influence and the incidence of political power. All the available evidence points increasingly to the view that the place of origin of the earliest harmonic developments, and consequently of modern music, was in the north of Europe, chiefly in England, and possibly also to some extent in Scandinavia. From there it made its way to France and Belgium and only ultimately to Italy. As I say, it does not work out exactly in details in accordance with Professor Petrie's sequence, but the general trend coincides

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clearly enough. Everything, in fact, goes to suggest that there is a certain element of incompatibility between great musical achievement on the part of a race, and the possession of great political power and material prosperity; and in this respect it is again the same with nations as with individuals. The musician is, in general, proverbially incapable in practical affairs—far more so than other artists. Great princes and rulers of men have seldom been greatly occupied with music. Frederick the Great, in fact, is probably the only noteworthy exception to the rule which is best exemplified by Ludwig II of Bavaria.

One is justified, therefore, in saying that no race *per se* is specifically musical or unmusical; the conditions that make for creative activity are not of a national order. The fact that certain races have led the way at certain periods has not prevented them from falling to the rear at others, and the contrary proposition holds equally good. It is, indeed, probable that ultimately every nation brings forth its appropriate quota of outstanding talent; if some would seem not to have done so as yet, the assumption that they will do so in the near or distant future is all the stronger, in the same way that, over a large number of sessions at the roulette table, the incidence



of all thirty-six numbers will work out approximately level in spite of many phenomenal and spectacular runs on the same number or numbers.

To recapitulate the findings in the present chapter: firstly, great musical developments in the past are not as a rule encountered in any age or any country in which the classical aesthetic ideals are in the ascendant, such values being more favourably disposed to the visual than to the aural arts. Secondly, as a corollary it was observed that in the case of a nation which during its history had excelled in both directions equally, it would generally be found that it excelled in them at different times and seldom, if ever, simultaneously. Thirdly, it would seem that the possession of political and economic power, if not exactly irreconcilable with important musical developments, is hostile or at least unfavourable to their growth or cultivation. The application of these principles, based upon the history of art, to the present, may perhaps help us to some extent to anticipate the possible developments in the near future.

Let us begin once more with France. As we have already had occasion to observe (see p. 86) France, of all modern nations, comes nearest to the Greek ideal in her attitude towards the arts. All French aesthetic writings are consistently based upon the

conception of music as a mere humble handmaid to literature. When Gluck wrote, in the preface to *Alceste*, that the sole function of music is to support poetry, he was merely echoing the unanimous views of French aestheticians, and dutifully seeking to put them into practice. Again like the Greeks, French thinkers contemptuously dismissed the pretensions of music to be considered as an art at all when dissociated from words and the task of expressing them or colouring them. 'Le plus beau chant, quand il n'est qu'instrumental, devient presque nécessairement froid, puis ennuyeux, parce qu'il n'exprime rien. C'est un bel habit séparé du corps et pendu à une cheville. La musique pure c'est une marionnette qui voltige inutilement,' &c. Thus Pluche, one of the leading aestheticians of the eighteenth century in France, in his *Le Spectacle de la Nature*; and this view represented the general consensus of opinion, not merely of the period, but of most French thinkers of every age on the subject of music. When Debussy said that in *Pelléas et Mélisande* he had dispensed with parasitic musical development, he was merely restating the same orthodox French aesthetic a century and a half later. For the French, in fact, generally speaking, music consists primarily of opera and song, the role of the

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music being merely, as with the Greeks, to intensify the poetry; and the only periods in which France has been great in music have been, firstly, a period before this classical aesthetic had been formulated, in the Middle Ages, and secondly, during the Romantic movement, which was in revolt against the classical ideal. All the evidence points to the conclusion that France, in reaction against romanticism, is now turning back again to the classical ideal; France to-day, at least, is the aesthetic centre of the so-called neo-classical movement, which we shall have occasion to examine later.

If only for this reason it would seem unlikely that France will give birth to any important musical development in the immediate future, and this conclusion is strengthened by the fact that her chief energies to-day are still absorbed by the arts on the other side of the aesthetic circumference, painting and sculpture, in which direction she still remains supreme in the world to-day. Neither of these considerations, it need hardly be said, excludes the possible emergence of an individual musical genius. All that is suggested is that the conditions in France are peculiarly unfavourable to musical achievements on a large scale or to the development of an important school.

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Italy, curiously enough, has never been so consistently and uncompromisingly classical in her musical aesthetic as her Latin sister. Indeed, apart from the brief period round about 1600, when the Greek ideal was paramount, and the Florentine operatic school accordingly wrought utter devastation upon her music, Italy has always been strongly opposed to the doctrine of the supremacy of the word, the subordination of music to literary ideals, and the inferiority of so-called 'pure music' to that of music in association with poetry or drama. Her greatest achievements, no doubt, lie in the domains of operatic and church music, but the musical interest is always paramount. At the same time her striking sterility at the present time in the direction of the sister arts, of painting and sculpture, constitutes a negatively favourable index to her continued productivity in music. (Modigliani, though Italian by birth, is, like the Spaniard Picasso, more correctly to be regarded as a French artist, and it can hardly be said that Chirico affords any grounds for the supposition that he is the herald of an imminent glorious renaissance of Italian painting—not quite.)

On the other hand it must be admitted that other considerations are not so favourable. The whole

tendency of Fascism is turned outwards and directed towards material, economic, and political expansion; and this, as history shows, is invariably hostile to great musical creativeness. It seems only too true, moreover, that Italy to-day is in a state of complete musical stagnation and is living entirely in her glorious past. Since the death of Puccini there is not a single composer in Italy whose achievement suggests the slightest hope for the future either of himself or of his country. The example of Puccini, however, reminds one that precisely the same thing was said at the death of Verdi, and even at the death of Bellini, before Verdi's greatness had become apparent. And when we consider that ever since the middle of the sixteenth century right up to the present day there has been living a great Italian composer, it is difficult to believe that the dynasty has suddenly come to an end. On the other hand it might reasonably be argued that precisely on account of this immense fertility in recent centuries one should expect a period of absolute, or at least comparative, sterility. This applies equally to German music which also, apart from the Austrian atonal school which will be dealt with at length elsewhere, seems to have come to a full close with Richard Strauss. It is significant, moreover, that

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the phenomenon is accompanied by the same political conditions as in Italy, only more intensified, and that the musical degeneration has been even more sensationally rapid and complete. The decline has even been artificially accelerated by means of the expulsion of practically every composer of talent formerly living in the country, with the result that to-day Germany, so recently the musical centre of the world, is now a barren waste. Quite recently, moreover, Herr Kurt Weill, himself an exile, has told us that there are literally no young composers in Germany; the rising generation is simply not interested in music, or in any other art for that matter. Dr. Goebbels has prophesied that 'the German art of the coming decades will be heroic, hard as steel in its romanticism, non-sentimental, concerned with realities, national, and instinct with strong national pathos. This art shall be binding for all—or shall not be', by which last phrase the good Doctor means, presumably, that art must either swallow his queer prescription or cease to exist. The latter alternative would seem to have been adopted.

The attempt, indeed, to dictate to artists the kind of art they must create and the direction which they must pursue is not only doomed to failure but,

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if maintained and insisted upon, can only lead to complete artistic extinction. The experiment had already been tried in Russia. At the time when the Bolshevik Government was engaged in the 'liquidation' of the *bourgeoisie* and the capitalist system, an attempt was made, not merely to discard the music associated with the old order, but also to prescribe the rules and regulations according to which music should be composed. In the words of a contemporary manifesto:

'Our revolutionary composers will be conscious that music is an implement of the class struggle. Proletarian music will reflect the many-sided psychology of the people. Its task will be to penetrate subtly and deeply into the very substratum of the consciousness of the worker and peasant masses. It must unite their emotions, their thoughts, their will, spur them on in the struggle to overcome class enemies, and encourage them in the constructive role of creating the new social order. The new style and the new forms of this music are born from the class content of its ideas developing in the process of practical creative work.'

Every element of individualism, introspectiveness, subjectivity, sentiment, and other such bourgeois characteristics were to be ruthlessly eliminated; objectivity, monumentality, realism, and collectivism were to be cultivated, and the new music was

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to embrace 'all the noises of the mechanical age, the rhythm of the machine, the din of the great city and factory, the whirring of driving belts, the clattering of motors, and the shrill notes of motor horns'.<sup>1</sup> Experiments in this direction were made as early as 1918 with factory-whistle symphonies, the same writer tells us, and the first performance on a large scale took place in Baku on 7 November 1922. 'The fog-horns of the whole Caspian Fleet, all the factory sirens, two batteries of artillery, several infantry regiments, a machine-gun section, hydro-planes, and finally choirs in which all the spectators joined, took part in this performance.' But it all came to nothing, and these and similar experiments have now been abandoned, if only for the very good reason that the proletariat himself cared nothing for this so-called proletarian art, but infinitely preferred that of the old bourgeois régime. Trotsky himself, it is significant to note, in his *Literature and Revolution*, came to the conclusion that a true proletarian art was an impossibility, a contradiction in terms, and events have proved him right. The present rulers of Russia have recently executed a complete *volte-face* in the matter of art, and artists, writers, and composers are now allowed complete liberty of ex-

<sup>1</sup> René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*.



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pression, although no doubt works which approximate most closely to the proletarian ideal are still given precedence over the others to some extent. The consequence is that the most representative composers of modern Russia are in no special way distinguishable from those of pre-revolution days except for the fact, perhaps, that they are less revolutionary, more conservative.

It cannot honestly be said, however, that any of them has as yet achieved anything comparable to what was achieved by their great predecessors. This failure is not entirely to be ascribed to the Revolution and its catastrophic consequences; symptoms of exhaustion had already appeared in Russian music in the old Imperialist days. On this account alone it seems unlikely that any major musical developments will take place in Russia in the immediate future; the soil seems, temporarily at least, to be exhausted. In accordance with the law of averages it is reasonable to expect that the major developments will take place, not in those countries which have contributed most in the immediate past, but in those which have, for some time at least, lain comparatively fallow, or have so far contributed nothing of importance.

This process of levelling-out has already been in

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progress for some time, it may be observed. Until a century ago, neither the Slavs nor the Finno-Ugrian races (comprising Hungary and Finland) had contributed anything of value, apart from folk-song, to musical art; and all the smaller European nationalities had also been comparatively unproductive. The great achievement of the Russian school, however, was undoubtedly the most important collective manifestation in music during these hundred years; Liszt was one of the most important individual figures of that time as Sibelius is at present, and Bartók is likewise among the most significant of present-day composers. Similarly, various national schools—Czech, Scandinavian, Iberian—have come into being during the last century. It seems reasonable to assume that this process will continue for some little time to come, and that countries such as Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, and the various Balkan countries, which have hitherto remained comparatively silent, will in due course make their voices heard in the European concert—to say nothing of the various nations of the New World.

If one concludes by saying that for England the prospects are particularly bright, it is out of no narrow nationalism; on the contrary, the conclusion

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is to a large extent based upon negative and even depreciatory considerations. In the first place, England has never at any period of her history, except perhaps in the eighteenth century, been a stronghold of the classical aesthetic values which, as we have seen, are apt to constitute a somewhat sterilizing influence upon the art of music. In the second place, not even the most rabid Chauvinist could maintain that we lead Europe and the world in respect of the plastic or formative arts at the present time: nor could it be denied that so far as music is concerned England has lain fallow until quite recently, at least, for a quite impressively extended period. Finally, if Mr. Forsyth's theory is correct—and practically all the available evidence, as we have seen, goes to support it—the undoubted fact that the era of England's commercial, economic, and political supremacy is over, that our prosperity is visibly on the decline, that our colonial empire seems to be on the verge of disintegration—all this constitutes another negatively favourable omen in favour of musical productivity in these islands in the near future.

On the more positive side, it is probably true to say that England, since the political upheaval that has thrown Germany back into the Middle Ages, so far as art and culture and civilization are

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concerned, and the financial catastrophe that has devastated America, is the musical centre of the world to-day. It is probably also true to say that, small though it admittedly is, the musical public in this country is the most eclectic, intelligent, and enlightened in the world at the present time, if only because, not being self-supporting and self-sufficient, we have opened our doors to works of every nationality and to composers of every school, without favour or prejudice.

All circumstances in fact, both positive and negative, are in favour of a degree of musical productivity which has not been seen in this country since Elizabethan and Stuart days. All that remains to be done is to secure the birth of a few great men; the conditions for their emergence are uniformly favourable.

An ingenious friend of the present writer, having noted that in the period 2000 to 1000 B.C. the centre of civilization was in Memphis, during the preceding millennium in Babylon, and in the succeeding millennium in Greece and Rome, claimed to have discovered that they lay as nearly as possible in one straight line and were separated from each other by more or less equal distances. From these data he calculated that the line of civilization was due to

pass in the year 1923 through a certain village in Dorsetshire, where he happened to be living at the time. The present writer hopes, however, that his previous record, which can hardly be said to have been that of a rabid nationalist exactly, will absolve him, in the eyes of the reader, from any suspicion of being impelled to the foregoing conclusions by the motive of a Freudian wish-fulfilment such as that of his friend. They have been arrived at solely through the exercise of a calm and dispassionate consideration of past facts and present conditions, and of the future probabilities which derive from them.

## V. NATIONALISM

IN the eyes of many composers and critics all great music is fundamentally national, and always has been; it is therefore only natural and logical to assume that if this is a permanent condition and *sine qua non* in the art of both past and present, it will continue to be so in future. Consequently it will be as well to examine the contention in some detail.

Dr. R. Vaughan Williams, in his compositions, has always been one of the most consistent and thorough-going practitioners of the doctrines of nationalism, and in a recently published volume of lectures, entitled *National Music*, he has provided us with the fullest and most detailed exposition of the nationalist faith that has yet been written. It will be convenient, therefore, for the purposes of our inquiry, to devote a certain amount of space to a consideration of his arguments, of which the following is a brief synopsis.

‘Nobody could mistake Wagner for Verdi or Debussy for Richard Strauss. And, similarly, in spite of wide divergences of personal style, there is a common factor in the music, say, of Schumann and Weber.

‘And this common factor is nationality.’

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Furthermore, all the greatest music is based upon folk-song.

'If we look at a collection of German Volkslieder we are apt to be disappointed because the tunes look exactly like the simpler Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert tunes. The truth is, of course, the other way out. The tunes of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert are so very much like Volkslieder.

'We talk of the "classical tradition" and the "grand manner". This really means the German manner because it so happened that the great classical period of music corresponded with the great line of German composers.

'What we call the classical idiom is the Teutonic idiom and it is absolutely as narrowly national as that of Grieg or Moussorgsky.'

Haydn, he goes on to say, is slightly different, but this affords further support to his contention, since Haydn, he claims, was not a German or an Austrian, but a Croatian, and many of his themes are found to be identical with or similar to certain Croatian folk-tunes. Furthermore, the work of Bach is built up on the two foundations of the organ music of his Teutonic predecessors and the popular hymn-tunes of the German people. 'About three-quarters of Bach's work is built up on the popular hymn-tunes which he loved so well, in fact "borrowed"

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material. Not all of these hymn-tunes are, of course, folk-songs in the technical sense of the word, though many of them are adaptations from traditional melodies.' Even earlier still, secular tunes form the basis of many, if not most, of the polyphonic masses of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Even the plain-chant of the early church, Dr. Vaughan Williams asserts, is frequently influenced by popular music.

With the first contention no one is likely to disagree. In the same way that Dante is in some respects demonstrably Italian, Shakespeare English, Racine French, and so on, so is it true of most of the great masters of music. But not of all. One would be very hard put to it to determine the nationality of Handel from a scrutiny of his work alone. In some of it he would seem to be an Englishman, the legitimate successor of Purcell; in most of it, however, an Italian, but never does he strike one as being German. Again, it is undeniable that there are Teutonic elements in the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, but it is equally undeniable that there are just as many Latin elements in it—in the case of Mozart one could say without hesitation that they definitely predominate over the Teutonic. So with Gluck; one is conscious of



the Italian element in his work, and still more of the French, but the German element is far to seek and hard to find. In a word Handel, Gluck, and Mozart were pure cosmopolitans, the native element in their work being the least conspicuous or important. It is true that the Teutonic element is perceptibly greater in the music of Beethoven and Schubert than in that of the composers above mentioned, but it is none the less true to say that the language they speak is still basically Italian. As Nietzsche truly said, Schumann is the first composer to strike us as being recognizably German. Incidentally, to conclude that because there is often a resemblance between German folk-songs and melodies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, the latter must have imitated or been influenced by the former, is a purely capricious and arbitrary assumption. It is just as probable that the folk-songs in question were influenced by or imitated from the melodies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.

However that may be, it is a palpable absurdity to suggest that Mozart is as 'narrowly national' as Grieg or Moussorgsky. As for Haydn, it is unfortunate for Dr. Vaughan Williams's theory that the publication of his book should have coincided with that of Dr. Schmid's monumental study of

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Haydn's ancestry and racial origins, in which the author is able to show by means of irrefutable documentary evidence that Haydn was of pure Teutonic extraction on both sides of his family tree for at least a hundred years, and had not a drop of Croatian blood in his veins. This fact places Dr. Vaughan Williams and his fellow nationalists in an awkward dilemma, for it is evident either that the supposedly Croatian elements which had been detected in Haydn's music are not Croatian at all, or else that Haydn was one of these reprehensible composers, in the eyes of Dr. Vaughan Williams, who went a-whoring after strange and exotic national gods instead of cultivating his native speech and mode of thought.

What has been said above concerning Beethoven and Schubert is even more true of Bach: namely, that although much of his work is unmistakably German, at least as large a part could be mistaken for that of an Italian, and part for that of a Frenchman, while a great part suggests no nationality whatsoever. In other words, he spoke a cosmopolitan language, partly Teutonic no doubt, but embracing as many foreign elements as native ones. Nor would it be true to say that the German element was basic and the foreign artificial and

cultivated; the contrary is nearer the truth, namely, that the musical language of Bach is basically Latin, deriving ultimately, like that of all his contemporaries, from Alessandro Scarlatti. As for the hymn tunes on which he frequently built his works—not comprising three-quarters of his output, *pace* Dr. Vaughan Williams, or anything like it—they are admittedly not folk-songs but as often as not are recognizedly derived from the plain-song of the Catholic Church. Not that this would daunt Dr. Vaughan Williams, who, as we have seen, claims that plain-song itself is largely derived from ancient popular music, and adduces in support of this theory the well-known example of a melody which is to be found incorporated in the Roman rite, shown by the French musicologist Julien Tiersot to be strikingly similar to a French folk-song. This may well be the origin of the liturgical chant in question, and there are other Gregorian melodies whose origin is similarly suspect, but cannot with certainty be traced. Those, however, constitute such a minute proportion of the immense *corpus* of Gregorian chant as to be utterly insignificant. In any case the particular tune on which Dr. Vaughan Williams bases his sweeping thesis is so very different in character from ordinary plain-chant, as he himself

admits, that it was known as the 'tonus peregrinus'—the outlandish, strange, or exotic tune. His argument invalidates itself, in fact, through the sole illustration he adduces in support of it.

Finally, why, asks Dr. Vaughan Williams, did the old Netherland composers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries introduce secular airs such as the famous *l'homme armé* into masses, as a *canto fermo*? His answer is that 'I think these old composers felt that they must keep in touch with real life, that they believed, unconsciously, that music which is vital must preserve the popular element'. If that were so these old composers went a very queer way about it, for nothing could be less in touch with what Dr. Vaughan Williams means by 'real life' than the mathematical problems and musical crossword puzzles of the Netherland school.

The real reason, of course, is simply that it was the custom in those days to base a learned composition on a borrowed theme, in order to show one's skill, in the same way that to-day an improviser will ask a member of the audience to give him a theme upon which to extemporize; a theme of his own choosing would be obviously suspect. Sometimes the composer would take a fragment of plain-chant, sometimes a popular song, which he then proceeded

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to subject to every conceivable form of contrapuntal torture. If he frequently preferred popular songs, it was simply because as a general rule such tunes lent themselves more readily to contrapuntal feats of ingenuity than the comparatively inflexible and austere plain-song melodies.

Dr. Vaughan Williams, incidentally, employs a curious line of argument to prove his point that great music is a growth of the national soil.

‘When grape vines were first cultivated in California the vineyard masters used to try the experiment of importing plants from France or Italy and setting them in their own soil. The result was that the grapes acquired a peculiar individual flavour, so strong was the influence of the soil in which they were planted. I think I need hardly draw the moral of this, namely, that if the roots of your art are firmly planted in your own soil and that soil has anything individual to give you, you may still gain the whole world and not lose your own souls.’

One is glad that Dr. Vaughan Williams decided to draw his moral instead of leaving it to be inferred, for a different one is not only possible but much more natural and logical: namely, that if you transport a noble vine from the Bordeaux country or Tuscany, and set it to grow in California, the resultant wine being what we know only too well

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from acid experience, the moral should surely be that it were better to import our wine from France or Italy instead of trying to grow it ourselves—which is precisely the contrary of what Dr. Vaughan Williams would have us do. As it happens our analogy is very much closer to fact, for the relation which American music bears to French or Italian music is indeed very much the same as that which Californian wine bears to claret or Chianti. It is exceedingly doubtful, in fact, whether the deliberate cultivation of a national musical idiom can ever lead to anything but a similarly mediocre result.

The truth is, of course, that whereas national sentiments are as old as civilization itself and may perhaps always have existed—as instances whereof may be cited the tenth book of Genesis and the second book of the *Iliad*—nationalism in the narrow and intense sense of the word is a comparatively recent growth, whether in politics, philosophy, or art. The most important difference, indeed, between the nineteenth century and its predecessor probably consists in the sudden formidable accentuation of national self-consciousness. The eighteenth-century ideal was essentially cosmopolitan. When Oliver Goldsmith said, in a famous phrase, that he considered himself to be a citizen of the world—‘the

whole world being only one city, I do not much care in which of the streets I happen to reside'—he was not voicing a mere personal opinion, but was giving expression to the prevailing sentiment of his epoch. In the eighteenth century a nation was little more than a geographical and linguistic conception; passionate attachment to one's native soil, one's native language, culture, traditions, history, simply did not exist in the sense in which it is understood to-day. Even wars were dynastic, private quarrels between royal families or individuals, fought between reigning houses and their mercenaries; the people in general were in no way involved, and the subjects of an ostensibly enemy country were able to travel in perfect freedom and safety in what to-day would be considered hostile territory. When Voltaire applauded the military triumphs of his friend Frederick the Great over the French, when Goethe expressed his admiration for Napoleon and Beethoven dedicated his Third Symphony to him, no stigma of treason or lack of patriotism attached to them as it would have done if during the late war, for example, Messrs. Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells had knelt in homage at the feet of the German Emperor or Marshal von Hindenburg. People simply did not feel like that

in those days; and as in politics, so in art and thought.

Nothing in history is more surprising than the suddenness and completeness with which the change from cosmopolitanism to nationalism took place—so much so that one could almost give an exact date to it—and nothing is more paradoxical than the cause of the change, namely, the French Revolution, which was initiated and animated from the outset by the characteristically eighteenth-century conception of the brotherhood of man and the equality of all races. Napoleon himself, like a true child of the eighteenth century, had no sense of nationality whatsoever. It has been truly said of him that ‘in the encyclopaedic studies of Napoleon’s youth there is a serious gap—nowhere does he seem to have studied national character’, and it is in this very lack that the cause of his eventual downfall is to be sought. The tremendous awakening of French national consciousness, which was the direct consequence of the coalition against her and the invasion of French soil by the allied troops under the Duke of Brunswick, was exploited by Napoleon simply as an instrument of his personal ambitions. In so far as Napoleon was ever actuated by disinterested motives, his dream was of a world empire of which



Paris was only the capital. His complete inability to recognize the existence of national sentiments led him to provoke unwittingly a flaming patriotism in Germany, where it came to full force after the battle of Jena: in Spain, where it culminated in the rising of 1808 and marked the beginning of his downfall; and eventually in every country in Europe, including even Russia. The wars formerly fought between rival dynasties for their own personal ambitions or aggrandizement now for the first time became death-struggles between whole nations.

The change was not confined to politics, but manifested itself in every walk of life. Schiller, who in his youth, like Goldsmith, had claimed to be a citizen of the world ('I lost my fatherland to exchange it for the great world—what is the greatest of nations but a fragment?—it is a poor and little aim to write for one nation') and had clasped the whole human race to his breast in the *Ode to Joy*, lived to become, in his last work, *William Tell*, the most ardent apostle of nationalism. We find instances everywhere of this striking phenomenon. The philosopher Fichte, before the battle of Jena, wrote: 'Which is the fatherland of the truly cultivated European? It is Europe, and more particularly that state which at any given time has reached the highest

point of culture. Animated by this sentiment we need not fret about the fortune of particular states.' After the battle of Jena, however, he became the most fervid and eloquent of patriots and defenders of the concept of the national state. Wordsworth, again, who in his youth had greeted the French Revolution with open arms, and accepted its declaration of the oneness of mankind, came eventually to profess a narrow patriotism and extolled in his poetry the heroic sufferings of the insurgent Spanish and Tyrolese nationalists. Weber, whose early works were in conformity with the elegant cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth-century tradition, became transformed overnight, in his settings of Körner's *Leier und Schwert*, into the sturdy Tyrtaeus of the German revolt against the domination of Napoleon.

The most crucial difference, indeed, between the music of the nineteenth century and that of its predecessor consists in the extent to which the universal, cosmopolitan idioms that had hitherto prevailed gave place to what, for lack of a more satisfactory definition, we are obliged to call national idioms. Composers no longer consciously addressed themselves to the whole world as Beethoven had done and continued to do all his life, like a true son

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of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, but primarily to their compatriots.

It is necessary to distinguish carefully between this genuine nationalism and the cult of local colour, the love of the exotic, which is only a by-product of the Romantic Movement. The two things are often confused, and it is, as a matter of fact, sometimes very difficult to keep them separate in one's mind, since the practitioners of the one species are not infrequently practitioners of the other also; in fact they generally go together. Weber, for example, who, as we have seen, was the first thorough-going nationalist in music, was also an enthusiastic cultivator and searcher after exotic local colour, and introduced into his operas folk-songs from all over the world, even ranging as far afield as China in his *Turandot* music. Similarly Glinka, the first Russian nationalist, was also the first composer to exploit the picturesque possibilities of the Spanish musical idiom which has since become such a bane to music, like rabbits in Australia, in such admirable works as his *Jota Aragonese*, and *Souvenir of a Summer Night in Madrid*. It is true, of course, that tentative instances of the same thing are to be found here and there before the Romantic Movement proper, as in the Scythian music in Gluck's *Iphigénie*

*en Tauride*, and the Turkish music in Mozart's *Seraglio*. Haydn's occasional employment of Croatian folk-songs would also come into this category, and here we find a significant example of the confusion of the two genres; for we have already seen that if Haydn had really been a Croat, as Dr. Vaughan Williams, Sir Henry Hadow, and others have wrongly supposed, such things would have to be accounted a genuine racial expression. But since he was a German, they must be considered exoticisms.

There is obviously an element of absurdity in such a conclusion, which would determine the validity of a national utterance by reference to the pedigrees of the composer's parents and grandparents, in Nazi fashion. The true distinction, it would therefore seem, between the two types of nationalism, must consist in this: that in the one case it is genuine, unconscious, spontaneous, whereas in the other, whether of one's own race or any other, it is deliberately and consciously cultivated. The *Finlandia* of Sibelius, which makes no use of folk-songs or any other kind of local colour but is nevertheless demonstrably inspired by patriotic feelings, is a good example of the former; the *Russia* of Balakirev, based upon three folk-songs, is a good

example of the latter. (Needless to say it does not necessarily follow that *Finlandia* is a better work than *Russia*—on the contrary, I should say it is nothing like as good, but this does not affect the argument.)

It is amusing to observe, incidentally, that composers of the second category—those who deliberately and consciously cultivate national characteristics—are by no means invariably well disposed to those of the first. Delius, for example, in spite of his German or Dutch extraction, French residence, and Scandinavian proclivities, seems to many of us to be one of the most typically English of composers and personalities, in all the qualities and defects of his art; but Dr. Vaughan Williams will have none of it. 'Delius', he writes, 'does not become an Englishman because he happens to use an English folk-tune introduced to him by his friend Percy Grainger, as a *canto fermo* in one of his purely Nordic inspirations.' It would seem to some to be much nearer the truth to say that Delius does not cease to be an Englishman because he happens to use a Norwegian folk-tune introduced to him by his friend, Edvard Grieg, as a *canto fermo* in one of his purely English inspirations, *On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring*.

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The great attraction of deliberate and consciously cultivated nationalism is that it enables one to appear much more interesting and striking than one naturally is; in precisely the same way that even a most undistinguished looking person in ordinary modern European dress can become a quite impressive figure when turned loose in the fancy-dress department of Clarkson's. Balakirev is a very good example of this. In the fair amount of academic and eclectic work he produced we encounter a pleasing talent, but one entirely lacking in distinction; in his national compositions, on the other hand, he at once becomes a striking and attractive personality—not merely in his Russian nationalist works, by the way, but also in such things as his *Islamey* and the *Overture on Spanish Themes*, which are among the best examples of the exotic in music. In other words, Balakirev in plain clothes is a nobody; attired in the peasant costume of his native land, or the gorgeous robes of an oriental sheikh, or any other variety of fancy-dress he cares to adopt, he becomes a figure of importance. What is true of him is true of nearly all the self-conscious doctrinaire nationalists; they are 'Strube Little Men', strutting about in fancy-dress, hoping thereby to conceal their native emptiness and insignificance.

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This brings us to the consideration of an important point: how is it that the same composer should frequently excel equally in his exploitation of both native and foreign national idioms? For Balakirev is not exceptional in this; most so-called nationalist composers share this propensity with him, and are equally capable of handling the national idioms of other races besides their own—especially Spanish music, it will be observed. Not only have the Russian nationalists such as Glinka, Balakirev, and Rimsky-Korsakov cultivated Iberian characteristics with marked success, but also the French nationalists such as Debussy, Chabrier, and Ravel.

The most impressive feat of musico-linguistic versatility is, of course, that of Dvořák, a Czech nationalist who, in his 'New World' Symphony, is alleged to have created an American musical idiom out of African negro spirituals, which were themselves, incidentally, originally derived from Moody and Sankey, and Italian operatic arias.

The truth is that once a composer is capable of expressing himself in one distinctively national idiom, he can do so equally well in any other; once he has mastered one he has mastered all. And the simple explanation of this seemingly remarkable

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phenomenon is that the peculiarities which differentiate the national music of one race or nation from another are as a rule—to which there are admittedly exceptions—few and comparatively unimportant, consisting more often than not in a mere turn of phrase or some other quite superficial and immediately recognizable trait. A comparative study of the folk-music of all European races, and even many extra-European races as well, reveals a singular affinity between them; what is surprising about it all is not the differences so much as the resemblances between them, that which they possess in common rather than that which distinguishes them from each other.

Take, for example, the following observation from Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, under the heading of 'Song':

'It is a well-known fact that some of the most famous folk-songs of different countries are founded on the same subject, whether it be a legendary or historical event, or an incident of ordinary life.—In like manner the same tunes are the property of different countries. Their identity may not, perhaps, be detected at first beneath the disguises in which it is enveloped by national varieties of scale and rhythm and harmony; but it is certain that closer examination would establish many relationships hitherto unsuspected. An especially



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strong affinity exists between the English, Scottish, Welsh, German, and Scandinavian folk-poetry. Many of our old English tunes bear a strong resemblance to the Scandinavian, both in character and construction; and the remarkable affinity, especially between the Welsh and Danish songs, has been noticed by Dr. Crotch and others.'

If such similarities were confined to Nordic countries they might possibly be explicable on purely ethnographical grounds, as dating back to a common origin before the separation of the various Teutonic peoples; but unfortunately for this explanation, these resemblances and affinities extend so as to include even the most widely separated and ethnologically unrelated races. It was only the other day that Herr Irjo Kilpinen, the Finnish composer, observed, on paying a visit to this country, how greatly struck he was by the similarities between English and Scottish folk-song and that of his native land. The present writer once elicited precisely the same observation from the Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály, when he showed the latter specimens of English and Scottish folk-song. Professor Walter Starkie, in his entertaining travel books, corroborates these findings, with interesting additions, observing that 'the

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Scottish snap and the Hungarian is the same as one found frequently in Indian music'; he also notes curious and striking resemblances between Rumanian and Irish and Galician (Spanish) dances. Furthermore, the similarities between Scottish and Chinese and Javanese popular music has often been noticed, and there is probably no country in the world of which the folk-songs have not seemed strikingly akin to those of some other country bearing no conceivable relation to it, either historical or geographical.

The conclusion to which one is irresistibly led, then, is that underneath a superficial veneer of local colour—and sometimes not even that—there is a fundamental identity between all folk-song traditions. How often does one not read in programme notes concerning some new work of exotic provenance that 'the folk-music of the Mazagrans' (or whoever they happen to be) 'exhibits the noteworthy characteristic of oscillating perpetually between the extremities of gloom and the wildest gaiety and abandon'? All folk-music does. One also invariably reads that a special feature of Mazagran music consists in its strongly marked rhythmical character. All folk-music has it. The melodic idiom, too, we are inevitably told, alternates between that of the

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modes and the pentatonic scale. So it is with all folk-music, from China to Peru.

In fact, if one were to play a piece of 'national' music to some one who could not possibly be previously acquainted with it, he will undoubtedly recognize it as a piece of national or folk-music. But if you were to ask him what particular racial variety of folk-music it represents, he will in nine cases out of ten be completely at sea, for the simple reason that most national or folk-song traditions are very much alike in essentials; like the many varieties of a certain well-known brand of food products, they have nearly all the same dominant tomato folk-song flavour.

There is really nothing surprising in this, however; it is only what one would naturally expect, if one comes to think of it. Anthropology and ethnology (see, for example, Frazer's *Golden Bough*) strikingly attest to the fact that the same legends, beliefs, and taboos are to be found all over the world, and show how most of the folk-tales of all countries are fundamentally identical in their subject-matter. It would indeed be surprising if their music were an exception to this rule.

Nothing, in fact, is more cosmopolitan and international than the common people; the basic substance of human experience and its expression in

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art is everywhere akin, differing only in minor and unimportant accessories. 'Rien de plus cosmopolite que l'éternel,' as Baudelaire says, and this is as true of folk-music as of religious beliefs, social customs, or folk-tales. In the same way, in fact, that under their sometimes highly differentiated local costumes and customs peasants all the world over feel, think, and behave in very much the same way, so in music the popular folk-expression is everywhere alike at bottom, and the same naturally applies in consequence to the nationalistic art-music based upon folk-song.

A striking instance of this is to be found in the following theme from Sibelius's *En Saga*:

Ex. 1.



which has been praised by critics for its stern, unbending, rugged, Nordic character. But the formula on which it is built is recognizably identical with that of much Spanish national music, as exemplified in this subject from a piano piece of Albeniz, in *Iberia*:

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Ex. 2.



And so we find that the rugged grandeur of the north and the languorous sensuality of the south are based upon the same formula, which is also that of so much barbaric splendour of the east. It is no doubt equally to be found in the folk-music of the Far West. They have all the same tomato flavour, in fact.

Again, the beautiful 'Signore, ascolta' in Puccini's *Turandot*, which has been pointed to as a characteristically Italian utterance, in striking contrast to the frequent oriental exoticisms in the work, is only a transcription and harmonization of a Chinese folk-song *Sian Chok* which the present writer came across quite accidentally when turning over the files of the *Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1859, in an article on the musical notation of the Chinese by the Rev. E. W. Syle.

This is not to say that there are no folk-songs that clearly betray national origin; that would be absurd. But just as we find that picturesque local costumes are as a rule worn infrequently by the peasantry, and only on very special occasions, so

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we find that the number of highly differentiated melodies of a country is comparatively small in proportion to those which might seem to belong equally well to any other country. Any one who cares to take the trouble to wade through a large and comprehensive collection of folk-songs of any nationality will find this to be true. The comparatively few exceptions, oozing local colour at every semiquaver, are in the nature of 'show-pieces', and, as often as not, are not real folk-music at all. For example, what passes for Hungarian folk-music in the rest of Europe is not Hungarian at all, or folk-music, as Bartók and Kodály have been at pains to point out, but Tzigane, and dating back for the most part no farther than the beginning of the nineteenth century. Similarly experts in Spanish national music assure us that the kind of thing which passes for such abroad is no more authentic than in the case of Hungary, and again it is the gipsies who are responsible for it. We find precisely the same thing in Russia; these wild melancholy songs, saturated with Slavonic passion, which used to be heard in the cabarets of old St. Petersburg and Moscow, and are heard to-day chiefly in Montmartre, are of comparatively recent origin and once again are due to the Tziganes.

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It is surely rather suggestive that the three most strikingly national idioms in European music are all due to the same mysterious nomad race, and it would be tempting to propound the theory that all national idioms have been created by them. But that would perhaps be going a little too far. It is at least true, however, that authentic, ancient folk-music in all countries has nothing in common with this flamboyant, grease-painted nationalism, but is, on the contrary, for the most part singularly lacking in any strikingly individual qualities—is, in fact, rather dull, not to put too fine a point on it—and is much alike in all countries. Personally speaking, I greatly prefer the pseudo-nationalist gipsy music of Hungary, Spain, and Russia to the real thing; it seems to me, in spite of its surface flashiness, to be on a much higher level of musical interest than the genuine article. But that is neither here nor there.

And so we find that folk-music, when it is authentic and ancient, tends to be cosmopolitan and international; when it possesses distinctively national traits it is in general not folk-music at all in the proper sense of the word, but generally dates no farther back than the beginning of the nineteenth century or so. Apart from these two main categories, however, there are admittedly to be found a few

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examples in the folk-music of every country which do present certain features not encountered elsewhere; and it is possible to build up these isolated features into a style with a distinctive national physiognomy of its own. But to found a musical idiom largely on such minute particularities as distinguish the music of one race from another is inevitably to restrict oneself to a very narrow range of artistic possibilities. Within these self-imposed limits nationalism undoubtedly presents a rich field for musical exploitation, but it is one which is quickly worked out. The lode lies near the surface, and one generation of workers, at most, is enough to exhaust all its resources and potentialities, leaving nothing for those who come after. National schools are invariably short-lived; they have no capacity for replenishment or renewal, but perish like may-flies after a short and brilliant career. It will even be found that one creator of genius can himself exhaust all its possibilities within his own lifetime, and, having done so, reverts to a more cosmopolitan ideal. W. B. Yeats provides an example of this in poetry; in recent years he has turned his back on the Celticism of his earlier triumphs. Dr. Vaughan Williams himself, in his recent symphony, shows something of the same tendency; there is very little



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in it of the somewhat self-conscious and exclusive nationalism of most of his earlier work. Stravinsky's gradual abandonment, after *Les Noces*, of a national idiom, in favour of a kind of neo-classicism, is another instance of the same thing. De Falla seems to have fallen into complete sterility. Béla Bartók is perhaps the only example to-day of a prominent nationalist who continues to follow the path in which he began, and even it is becoming perceptibly more arid and stony with each successive work.

This fatal tendency to premature impoverishment constitutes the chief reason why it is unlikely that we shall witness any important developments of musical nationalism in the near future. We may reasonably expect to find the emergence of national schools in these countries which, for one reason or another, have not as yet produced any, but that is all. National schools in all the larger and more important countries have already long ago exhausted their resources.

It is true, of course, that at the present time nationalism appears to be more vigorously alive than ever before in the world of politics, but it has no repercussions in any other field. It is even open to doubt whether it is really as vital in politics as it appears to be. In the exacerbated form in which

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it surrounds us everywhere to-day it suggests illness rather than health, fever rather than energy, the paroxysms and convulsions of the death agony rather than a display of health and manly vigour, owing its existence solely to a pathological reaction against the injection of the virus of Marxian internationalism.

However that may be, it seems fairly safe to say that in the realm of thought and art nationalism as we understand it is a thing of the past. The great tidal wave of national feeling which, as we have seen, swept over Europe a century ago, had its counterpart in philosophy and art; all the best and most representative minds of the age were nationalistically inclined. To-day the contrary is true; whatever may prove to be the power and strength of contemporary nationalism in the world of politics, all the highest creative manifestations of the present time are unmistakably orientated in the direction of internationalism and cosmopolitanism, as in the eighteenth century. The fact that the most distinguished representatives of this tendency are outlawed or persecuted on account of it in many countries to-day is immaterial; nothing can disguise the fact that all the countries in which this intensified Chauvinism prevails are cultural deserts,

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the only supporters of the dominant régimes being time-serving sycophants and mediocrities. Dr. Goebbels may insist that the art of the future in Germany is to be national or nothing; if that is the only choice, then it will be the second alternative that will ensue: there will be nothing—nothing that is, of any value.

To conclude: while national differences will surely continue to exist in the future as they have done in the past, nationalism, in the narrow sense of the word, as an incentive or inspiration to musical creation, is played out. Even those exponents of it who are still actively creative are felt to be survivors from the past, not representatives of the present. That such an art will be that of the immediate future is therefore, to say the least, exceedingly improbable.

## VI. INDIVIDUALISM

UNTIL the beginning of the nineteenth century, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, music was essentially an international cosmopolitan language, preponderantly Italianate in derivation, which served as the vehicle of expression for composers of every nationality, just as Latin was the literary medium of all cultured and civilized peoples in the Middle Ages. And in the same way that, commencing in the eleventh century or so, Latin began to give way to the vernacular in all countries, so in the first half of the nineteenth century this uniform latinized musical speech began to break up to a certain extent into idioms and dialects which, if not actually unintelligible to other races, can only be fully appreciated by those who share the same cultural traditions, or else possess a certain temperamental affinity to them.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, and the beginning of the twentieth, another important change takes place and national idioms in their turn tend to give way to personal idioms. The possession of a wholly individual utterance, or mode of thought, quite unlike that of any one else,

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came to be regarded as the *sine qua non* of a great artist. And in the same way that the stylistic solidarity of the art of the eighteenth century and the nationalism of the succeeding epoch were only the aesthetic counterpart to the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of their respective ages, so this new orientation had likewise its parallel in the social and intellectual climate of its period—in the liberal, democratic ideals of the freedom of the individual and the right of every man to do as he pleases and ‘to think for himself’, as the saying is, which were paramount during the whole of the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first decade or so of the twentieth.

It need hardly be said, of course, that just as national characteristics have always existed in art to some extent or other, so likewise have originality of thought and individuality of utterance. Ultimately, no doubt, Palestrina, or Lassus, or Victoria are as highly personal and original in their way as any modern artist. The difference consists in the fact that they succeeded in imparting this sense of originality and personality, like that of their nationality, through the medium of a more or less common speech. Furthermore, it was not deliberately and consciously cultivated. On the contrary, in former times originality of outlook or peculiarity of manner

were regarded rather as reprehensible eccentricities than as assets, things to be avoided and suppressed so far as possible, not encouraged or cultivated; the artist drew his strength from the power of his genius rather than from the singularity of his nature. To be conspicuously different from one's fellows was to be an object not of envy or admiration, but rather of pity or derision, like a hunchback. Originality, in fact, was regarded as a kind of spiritual deformity in ancient times. The Greek word ἰδιώτης first meant a private person, then some one different or distinct from others by reason of some regrettable peculiarity, then a rude, untutored, uncivilized person—hence our modern word 'idiot'. We find the same implication in the use of the word 'original' in France—the Greece of the modern world. When the French call any one *un original*, the expression is by no means wholly, or even predominantly, complimentary, but rather contemptuous; it means that he is an eccentric, some one slightly queer in the head.

According to ancient classical standards, in fact, to be conspicuously different from others was a fault rather than a virtue. Similarly in the Middle Ages a distinction was always made between the musician who was a *phonascus*, or *troubadour*, or *trouvère*, who 'sought' after something new, and the

*sympphonetes*, who followed the tradition of his age; and the latter was rated the higher. Even as late as the seventeenth century we find Pascal, a typical representative of his age, contemptuously condemning Montaigne's *sot projet de se peindre*, and this view was on the whole predominant in the eighteenth century as well. Jean-Jacques Rousseau would seem to be the first person in modern times to take a positive pride in being different from everyone else. When he wrote, at the beginning of his *Confessions*, that 'je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus; j'ose croire n'être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent — si je ne vaux pas mieux, au moins je suis autre', he was saying something wholly new, something quite unprecedented, something scandalous almost in the eyes of his compatriots and contemporaries.

Even with Rousseau one is conscious of a certain attitude of defiance, as if he were ashamed as well as proud of his singularity. In modern times, however, the pride in being differently constituted from one's fellows has no such admixture of shame or regret. On the contrary it has come to be regarded as the highest merit conceivable. The French literary critic Rémy de Gourmont was only voicing the ideal of his generation when he wrote, in the

preface to his *Livre des Masques* (1896): 'La seule excuse qu'un homme a d'écrire c'est de s'écrire lui-même, de dévoiler aux autres la sorte de monde qui se mire en son miroir individuel. Sa seule excuse est d'être original; il doit dire des choses non encore dites, et les dire en une forme non encore formulée. Il doit se créer sa propre esthétique.' This was the ideal of the age in all the arts: to say things that had never been said before, in a form not yet formulated. Painters sought to paint pictures which even the most uncultured or myopic observers could not possibly fail to recognize as being theirs and no one else's at a distance of a hundred yards; composers sought to write music of which even the tone-deaf could triumphantly and unerringly identify the authorship at the very first bar. The cult of originality is the hall-mark of the period which centres around the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, in all the arts; it is a characteristic to be found in the best as well as in the worst art of the time. One finds its most eminent musical representatives in the persons of Debussy and Delius. 'Secouez la vieille poussière des traditions — rester unique — chercher la discipline dans la liberté'—such was the aesthetic ideal formulated by Debussy. In the eyes of Delius the primary neces-



sity for an artist was to develop his personality at all costs, to follow the dictates of one's nature in spite of all opposition and all possible consequences, to realize one's own peculiar angle of vision—what Cézanne called his *petite sensation*—however greatly it conflicts with that of the rest of the world. And whether these aesthetic principles are endorsed or not, the fact remains that practically every artist of distinction in recent times has a manner which is his and his alone; one can recognize at once, beyond the possibility of error, the work of Strauss, Elgar, Schönberg, Berg, Bartók, Scriabin, Sibelius, van Dieren, and any one else, even down to quite minor figures—a thing which would have been quite impossible in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. It is true, of course, that all the music of a remote period is apt to sound much the same to us, in the same way that negroes or Chinamen are apt to look alike to us, and no doubt to contemporaries the differences between individual composers in former times seemed much greater than they do to us now; but the fact remains that their personalities are manifested primarily in the underlying conception and only secondarily in small and unimportant surface differences; they did not, with a few rare exceptions, speak an entirely different language from all

their fellow workers. That this is absolutely, and not relatively, true is shown by the fact that when one of these rare exceptions occurs, as did Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Italy, he stands out with a quite startling detachment from the comparative uniformity of the background of the period. On the other hand, this quality of absolute 'otherness' distinguishes practically all composers of the present day from each other. One could not possibly, for example, mistake a work of Strauss for one of Debussy, or one of Bartók for one of Ravel, in the way that one might excusably hesitate before deciding whether a certain work was by Palestrina or Victoria, by Bach or Vivaldi, by Haydn or Mozart. And if all these latter stand out conspicuously from amongst their various contemporaries it is not so much because they differ strikingly from them in manner or even in matter, but rather in stature—in the quantity rather than in the quality of their genius.

It is true, of course, that originality exists to some extent in every one; we are all of us different from each other in some respect in the same way that—or so we are told—all the leaves of a tree are different from each other. We could not escape from our individualities even if we would; we are condemned

to originality. It is also undeniable that individuality of outlook, in a more positive sense, is an indispensable factor in every great work of art; that the value of the artist's achievement resides in the purely personal aspect of his donation to a greater extent than it does in those aspects of it that he inherits from predecessors, shares with contemporaries, and passes on to successors. That which only he has done, that which no one but he could possibly do—that is the essence of an artist's contribution. Ultimately nothing else really matters. Bishop Berkeley, who in his philosophy denied objective reality to all phenomena, observed, in the margin of his *Commonplace Book*, 'nothing truly exists, save persons'.

On the other hand, it is equally true that we are all of us very much alike in many, and perhaps most, respects. As Turgenev has pointed out in one of his *Poems in Prose*, it may be a scientific fact that all the leaves on a tree are different from each other, but what struck him as being much more remarkable was how monotonously alike they all were. And while it may equally be true that all people are different from each other, the differences are largely accidental, unimportant, unessential. A man's personality represents that element in him which dis-

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tinguishes and separates him from others, whereas a man's 'impersonality', so to speak, represents that which he shares with the rest of humanity, that which is most basic and fundamental, that which is in fact the material of the greatest art. The highest achievements are of those artists who, while always remaining themselves, and filling their works with their personalities, have nevertheless succeeded in giving expression to ideas, conceptions, and sentiments which are common to all; and too often we find that the contemporary artist who prides himself above all things on his possession of a highly personal angle of vision or mode of expression—or both—is apt to emphasize and accentuate those minor qualities which distinguish him from the rest of the world rather than those in which he is at one with them, and tends consequently to fall into mere empty mannerism and idiosyncrasy.

In the same way, in fact, only to an infinitely greater extent, that the deliberate self-confinement of the nationalists to a limited order of conceptions and a restricted vocabulary led to premature exhaustion, so we find that the champions of freedom from tradition and complete originality of utterance generally say all that they have to say in a few works, and then spend the rest of their lives repeating themselves.

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No better or more typical example of this could be found than Debussy. In his determination to achieve a wholly personal expression he resolutely turned his back upon all traditional methods of construction: not merely the classical sonata system with its method of thematic development, and the ancient fugal system with its principle of the contrapuntal combination of themes, but even also the romantic form of the so-called symphonic poem, with its device of thematic metamorphosis or transformation. In default of these he was compelled to rely to a dangerous extent on mere repetition in order to achieve continuity. The greater part of the texture of his music, it will be found on examination, consists of two bars identically repeated, then another two bars similarly repeated, and so on, with a resultant monotony which eventually becomes intolerable. As with style and method of construction, so with thought. In deliberately avoiding all these ideas and conceptions which are common to all, and by restricting himself to the realization of those which belonged to himself alone, he quickly fell into a condition of premature sterility. By the time he reached maturity he had no longer anything fresh of his own to say.

The fact is, as I have pointed out already, apropos

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of Debussy in *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, that the particular kind of originality which he possessed was a kind of talisman which enabled him to achieve striking results for a time, but, like the *Peau de chagrin* of Balzac's novel, it automatically dwindled away with use until in the end there was nothing of it left.

'To create only out of one's own personality and to disdain the rich traditional legacy of the past is the artistic equivalent of living on one's capital. Sooner or later there must come an end to its resources. It has no means of renewal or replenishment. It is not a fresh ever-living source welling up spontaneously from the soil of music, but a pool of still water, which tends to become stagnant and unwholesome even before it is wholly depleted. And when Debussy had come to an end of his natural resources, and had exhausted all the limited possibilities afforded by the narrow and restricted circle of conceptions to which he had chosen to confine his talents, he was confronted with the alternative of either repeating himself and writing variations on what he had already done, or of reverting to some form of traditionalism.'

For a time he chose the former alternative and wrote many works which, although they are very much more accomplished than some of his earlier works, have nothing like the same elusive appeal

and subtle glamour. Eventually, in his last works, the *Sonates pour divers instruments* and others, he seeks to return to the tradition of the old French masters such as Rameau and Couperin.

So with Ravel. After writing a few charming and highly personal works he relapsed into such things as *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, and at the time when he should by rights have attained to his fullest maturity he seems to have become incapable of anything better than elaborate and artificial pastiches like *La Valse*, monstrosities such as *Bolero*, and mechanical emptinesses such as the Piano Concerto, which might be fitly named *Le Tombeau de Ravel*.

The case of Delius is very similar in essential respects. The increasing individuality of his work after *Paris* goes hand in hand with an increasing narrowness of scope and a tendency to relapse into empty mannerism in his less inspired moments. His later orchestral and choral works such as the *Requiem*, the *Dance Rhapsody No. 2*, and so on are without exception inferior to earlier works of the same type; and the various concertos and sonatas of the last years are failures on the whole, like the equivalent traditional works of Debussy.

It may be taken as an axiom, indeed, that the more narrowly personal the art of a composer, the

sooner are its potentialities exhausted—the one is in direct ratio to the other. But apart from this constant feature of premature exhaustion which characterizes the work of those who seek primarily to achieve a wholly personal art, there is the further grave weakness that such an art can only be fully appreciated by those of the public who possess a temperamental affinity to the artist, or else are able and willing to identify themselves, momentarily at least, with his intensely individual attitude. On the other hand, it will invariably leave entirely unmoved and indifferent those who have no such personal approach or temperamental affinity to it. Mere passive receptivity, even if accompanied by a high level of purely musical insight, will not enable any one to enter into the spirit of such an art if it should happen to be temperamentally antipathetic to him.

A similar limitation of appeal is to be found in connexion with nationalism in music; it goes without saying, however, that with 'personalism' or individualism these limitations must inevitably be more closely drawn. In considering the art of earlier times one can to a great extent discount and ignore one's personal tastes and reactions. To say, for example, that the art of a Bach, a Mozart, or a Beethoven, does not appeal to one personally does not



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imply that one thinks it bad, unless one is a fool; one is merely confessing to a personal idiosyncrasy of a kind to which every one is subject and which no one deplores more than oneself. In other words, one recognizes the fact that there is in such music a substratum of objective aesthetic reality which is independent of one's personal reaction to it. But in the music of Debussy or Delius there is no such substratum of objective aesthetic reality, or at any rate very little. If one likes it one thinks it good, if one dislikes it one thinks it bad, and it is useless to argue about it or to attempt to convert another to one's way of thinking. One can sympathize with the irritation which a critic such as Mr. Ernest Newman expresses with regard to what he calls the 'sensitized plate' school of criticism, which sets up one's personal reaction to a work as the sole criterion of excellence. But with such music as that which we are discussing—and it undoubtedly constitutes the greater part of contemporary music—there is no other possible standard of judgement, anarchical though it admittedly is. For example, I have tried to indicate above what seems to me to be a serious flaw in Debussy's method of construction; but the Debussyist would be perfectly entitled to reply that this peculiar individual mannerism was an essential

feature of his art and the source of its charm and subtle poetry.

However that may be, there can be little doubt that although a personal style is a highly attractive characteristic when one first becomes acquainted with it, it is apt to become exceedingly wearisome in the long run. In the same way that it is not our worst faults that exasperate our friends or those with whom we have to live, but the small unimportant mannerisms, the way in which we eat toast or drink soup; so in art it is not the glaring monumental faults of a Shakespeare or a Beethoven that irritate us, but rather the small, petty, niggling habits and characteristics of those artists who have a definite manner of their own.

A strong initial attraction, in fact, is succeeded only too often by a subsequent aversion, and it is certainly a fact that those artists who most powerfully attract the public by means of their highly personal style at first, generally suffer ignominious eclipse once their work has been familiar for any length of time, and give place to new idols who, in their turn, give way to others, and so on. Observing this, M. Jean Cocteau in his *Coq et Harlequin* put forward the following ingenious method of circumventing it: 'Je propose l'absence d'un style. Avoir

du style au lieu d'avoir un style. C'est ce qui permet de tourner le dos à l'œuvre précédente, et de courir à chaque nouvelle œuvre les chances d'un début.' By changing thus his style every few years and becoming a blushing débutant with each successive work, the artist escapes the melancholy fate of those who have a recognizable style in everything they do, attracting at first and subsequently wearying the fashionable audience which to-day makes and unmakes artistic reputations overnight, like the *tricoteuses* who sat at the foot of the guillotine in the days of the French Revolution.

It is by means of the adoption of this technique that Stravinsky has succeeded in holding the attention of the arbiters of musical fashion for such a long time. They are kept in a state of continual expectation, excitement, and suspense. What is he going to do next? that is the question. What it actually is matters little so long as he keeps them guessing, so long as it is always something different, something new—above all something unexpected. With each successive work he thus remains 'the latest thing' and never becomes a back-number.

The spectacle reminds one of nothing so much as of the chamois on perilous loose-stoned mountain slopes, who leaps and leaps again before the moving

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surface has had time to gather momentum and sweep him away with it. Never to stop long enough in one place for the growing avalanche of boredom to overwhelm him—this to-day is seemingly his sole preoccupation. He cannot resign himself to becoming old-fashioned or middle-aged or *passé*, like famous beauties who are beginning to get on in years.

In the course of the many spectacular tergiversations which he has been gravely executing in recent years, in accordance with M. Cocteau's prescription, Stravinsky has involved himself in many curious contradictions. To take a few instances: for a long time he was at great pains to maintain that the stringed instruments were altogether too subjective and emotional and romantic to give proper effect to his objective and intellectual and classic conceptions. (This pronouncement, incidentally, is another echo from Jean Cocteau's *Coq et Harlequin*, where he says that 'we may soon hope for an orchestra where there will be no caressing strings, only a rich choir of wood, brass, and percussion', evidently in ignorance of the fact that such a combination had already long existed in the shape of the ordinary military band.) Apart from the inherent perversity of the point of view—surely the wood-wind, at least, are

very much more expressive and subjective and romantic than the strings—Stravinsky proceeded shortly afterwards to give the lie to his pronouncement by writing a work, *Apollo Musagètes*, for strings alone.

Similarly, he and his disciples had for a long time been assuring us that the one thing which beyond all others was anathema to them was the expression or evocation of emotion. Music, we were told until we were tired of hearing it, should be pure sensation, the objective investigation of aural values. No sooner had the musical public begun to acquiesce in this dogma, from sheer weariness, than Stravinsky proceeded to execute a complete somersault in his *Symphonie des Psaumes*, of which the three movements, we were told from an obviously inspired source, correspond with three emotional phases: supplication for divine aid, hope and aspiration for relief, and praise and adoration. (On the title-page, incidentally, we are informed that the work is composed to the glory of God, but dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra—an interesting and instructive lesson in the art of how to make the best of both worlds.) Apart from that, one finds a frequent employment of expression marks in the work—*dolce cantabile*, *tranquillo espressivo*, and so

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forth—a procedure we had formerly been taught by the composer and his satellites to regard as literary, romantic, sentimental, and everything that is most pernicious and detestable. The harmonic idiom of much of the music, moreover, is of a distinctly emotional chromatic order, while the melodic writing, particularly in the last movement, is frequently of a mawkish sweetness in comparison with which that of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* is as sugar to saccharine. Two of the themes in the last part, indeed, are such that even the Rev. John Bacchus Dykes himself, the supreme master of the genre exemplified in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, would assuredly have discarded them if they had occurred to him, as being altogether too sickly and sentimental.

In this work, in fact, Stravinsky fulfilled the prophecy made by the present writer in *A Survey of Contemporary Music* about twelve years ago: 'the chances are that Stravinsky, being little more than an artistic weathercock who turns in whatever direction the wind is blowing, will follow the example of his colleagues in the other arts, and revert to some form of expressionism, *via* the classical forms.' But one cannot lay claim to any great acumen in making this forecast. Stravinsky's ap-

parent inconsistencies and tergiversations, however bewildering from the point of view of his own development, are in reality no more difficult to anticipate or explain than those of a woman who is always dressed in the latest Paris fashions. One can generally foretell fairly accurately what Stravinsky will do next by simply acquainting oneself with the latest fashionable cult or pose in Paris at the moment, and especially the latest activities of the painter Picasso and the latest pronouncements of Jean Cocteau who, as we have already seen, does most of Stravinsky's thinking for him; and since the latter had proclaimed in his *Rappel à l'ordre* the necessity for a return to classicism, and since neo-Catholicism, neo-Thomism, and so forth, had become the latest thing among the French intelligentsia, it was inevitable that sooner or later these tendencies would be reflected in the music of Stravinsky. If it is becoming difficult for the first time to say what he is likely to do next it is only because he has now tried everything. His most recent work, up to the time of writing, *Perséphone*, is again a reaction against the foregoing one, the *Symphonie des Psaumes*, and its tentative expressionism. His most recent aesthetic pronouncement, moreover, in the recent *Chroniques de ma vie*, is to the effect that 'music, in its essence,

is incapable of expressing anything whatever—either a sentiment, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon, or anything else'. This statement is not merely in contradiction with the implied aesthetic of the *Symphonie des Psaumes*, but even with his earlier aesthetic, in accordance with which he declared expression to be the enemy, the one thing to be avoided at all costs in music. How one is to avoid a thing which is manifestly non-existent and impossible of attainment is difficult to say. It might no doubt be replied that both his earlier theory, that expression must be avoided, and his later practice in the work mentioned, which would seem to suggest that after all it is desirable, represent points of view which he has outgrown and discarded; but unfortunately he even contradicts himself once more in the course of the *Chroniques de ma vie*, when he describes how the initial conceptions of both *Petrouchka* and the *Sacre du printemps* had their origins in pictorial and literary associations.

The alleged 'neo-classicism' of the later work of Stravinsky and the music of other composers raises an issue which is too important to be dealt with here, and deserves a chapter to itself. For the moment we are only concerned with him in illustration of Jean



Cocteau's advocacy of the policy of changing one's style in each successive work so as always to be the latest fashion—a strategy of which Stravinsky has proved himself to be a past master. It is nevertheless pathetic to see what was once a distinguished and vigorous talent, albeit of a minor order, becoming thus a mere artistic fashion-plate for the delectation of the snobbish intelligentsia of the larger European capitals.

The explanation of the phenomenon is no doubt to be found, in part at least, in purely individual causes; Stravinsky's talent was never of the kind that grows steadily from strength to strength, but rather one which develops rapidly and achieves its climacteric prematurely. There can be little doubt, however, that the explanation is also largely racial, since, more than any other artist, the Russian depends for his inspiration on close contact with his native soil and his own people. Deprived of this, his talent almost invariably wilts like a cut flower, and this is to a great extent what has happened to Stravinsky. In this respect he is a tragic living symbol of the ruin and downfall of a great culture; he is the typical *émigré* of art.

As for M. Cocteau's aesthetic, which has been put into practice by other composers besides Stravinsky,

though by none as successfully, there is much to be said in favour of it on abstract grounds. If the artist is not content merely to repeat himself and write variations on previous works as the consistent nationalist and the consistent individualist are in the end driven ineluctably to do, but attempts to achieve something different in each work, changes of style are not only inevitable but desirable, for the style should be conditioned by the conception, not the conception by the style. In spite of all such specious arguments, however, most people would probably argue in feeling that there must be at best a serious lack of centrality, purpose, sincerity, and conviction in a composer who finds it necessary thus to execute a complete *volte-face* in each successive work, and to slough his style, as a snake does his skin, every year or so, in order to keep us interested in what he is doing. As that eminently consistent stylist Karl Baedeker observes in his lapidary survey of Sienese painting: 'With Domenico Beccafumi, who frequently changed his style, begins the period of decline'—the ominous implication, conveyed with the utmost subtlety, being that there is a definite connexion between the two phenomena of decadence and a frequently changing style; and he is probably right. Baedeker is always right.

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Still, it is only when we reach the final stage of all in this process of stylistic devolution which we have been examining in this chapter and the preceding one—the logical conclusion to which these successive steps inevitably tend—that our growing doubts become certainties, our worst suspicions are confirmed, and the whole progression from universalism to nationalism, from nationalism to individualism, from individualism to multiplicity of styles, stands clearly revealed as a gradual but continuous process of disintegration culminating in anarchy and dissolution. This is the stage at which we continually encounter highly discrepant styles and idioms employed not merely within the limits of a single composition, but in close juxtaposition to each other; straightforward diatonicism side by side with complex chromaticism or polytonality, and the musical equivalent of journalese alternating sometimes with the most recondite neologisms, and sometimes with outworn archaisms.

This tendency is perhaps best exemplified in the group of French composers formerly known as *Les Six*, but it is by no means confined to them—indeed, it is a characteristic feature of most ‘advanced’ composers in every country at the present time. There is obviously nothing to be said in defence of such

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a tendency. Unity of style is the *sine qua non* of art in every period; without it a work of art cannot be said even to exist at all.

It will be as well to recapitulate briefly the conclusions to which the foregoing observations in this chapter inevitably lead.

We have already pointed out how the cosmopolitanism of the music of the eighteenth century, the nationalism of that of the first part of the nineteenth century, and the individualism of the second part and the first decade or so of the twentieth, all had their counterpart in the political and sociological *Zeitgeist* of their respective periods. It is consequently only reasonable to assume that there will be a similar correspondence in the future.

Now, nothing is more certain, if we look around us to-day, than that the liberal, democratic era of which the individualistic tendency in art was the counterpart, is definitely over, for the time being, at least. To-day individual freedom, the liberty of the subject, the right to live one's life and to do as one pleases, is a thing of the past throughout the greater part of the civilized world, and is likely to become so in the rest of it in the near future. As Signor Mussolini has only too truly observed in a brilliant contribution to the *Enciclopedia Italiana*:

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‘Never more than at the present moment have the nations felt such a thirst for authority, for a direction, for order. If every century has its peculiar doctrine, there are a thousand indications that Fascism is that of the present century. . . . Liberalism denied the State in the interests of the particular individual; Fascism re-affirms the State as the only true expression of the individual.’

One does not need to be a Fascist to agree with the implications of this; his political opposite, the Communist, affirms just as dogmatically and even more ferociously the doctrine of the subservience of the individual to the State. There is absolutely no difference between the two in their common hatred and suppression of the doctrines of freedom and individualism. Even in those countries which still profess the democratic faith there is more lip-service to the ideal than genuine belief in it; in practice the liberty of the subject to do and think as he wishes is encroached upon more and more every day in every country in the world. It is the merest superficiality and humbug, moreover, to maintain, as do the disconsolate but vocal remnants of liberalism to-day, that this state of affairs has come about as the result of criminal dictatorships or bureaucratic tyrannies, or even sheer inertia on the part of the

people. It is only too true that it has the active support of the majority. Does any one to-day still seriously believe that a free referendum in any of the dictator states—Fascist, Nazi, or Communist—would result in a vote of censure on the existing régime? On the contrary, they all rule with the enthusiastic support of the majority, without which, indeed, they would not continue to exist for a moment. When a liberal of the old school sees a nation calmly voting for despotism and slavery he immediately concludes that fear or intimidation must be the cause; but the unpalatable truth is that the overwhelming majority of people do not like liberty, do not want it, and never have wanted it. They do not know what to do with it when they have got it; their one idea is to get rid of it as soon as possible. Liberty entails responsibility; and the chief reason why the outbreak of the War was greeted with such jubilation by the majority in all belligerent countries was simply because it enabled them to throw overboard their liberty and responsibility, and to become unthinking cogs in an impersonal mechanism—to be ordered about and to have to obey blindly instead of having to think for themselves and act according to their individual judgement.

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These platitudinous observations, moral and sociological, are not made for their own sake, it need hardly be said, but because of the close correspondence between art and other human activities to which allusion has already been made. For just as in actual life to-day men are weary of liberty and sigh for discipline and authority, so in art, so in music—the present age is tired of individualism and freedom of expression, and yearns for law, order, and tradition. It seems unlikely, to say the least, that the *Zeitgeist* of the immediate future will change in this respect—it seems more likely to be intensified.

One will therefore be justified in assuming that the music of to-morrow will be distinguished, not for its freedom of expression, or individuality of style, or independence of thought like that of yesterday, but rather for its orthodoxy, impersonality, and solidarity.

The two main alternatives to be discerned in the music of to-day which would seem provisionally to satisfy these conditions, are atonalism and neo-classicism.

## VII. ATONALISM<sup>1</sup>

THERE can surely be little doubt in the mind of any one who takes an intelligent interest in music that by far the most important issue of our time is that which is raised by the later work of Arnold Schönberg and the school to which it has given rise. It seems at first sight to constitute a direct challenge to all our accepted ideas and to all the principles that have hitherto governed musical art. Is the tonal system on which music has been securely based for the last three hundred years capable of further development and exploitation, or is it merely an outworn idiom which must be relegated to the scrap-heap and superseded by the atonal, twelve-note chromatic scale exemplified in this music, in the same way that the old tonal system itself is popularly supposed to have superseded the modal system about the beginning of the seventeenth century? For in the same way that St. Joachim of

<sup>1</sup> In recent years Schönberg and his disciples have abjured the name of atonalism, protesting that it constitutes a misrepresentation of their present aims. However that may be, the name has come to stay, like 'Gothic' or 'Impressionist', and it is in this sense that it is employed here, as a general term to indicate certain well-recognized tendencies, and not as a strict definition.



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Flores divided the history of the human race into three periods, the reign of the Father during the period of antiquity, the reign of the Son lasting until the Millennium, and the reign of Paraclete or the Holy Ghost in which we are presumably living to-day (although one might not think it); in the same way that Marxian historians divide modern history into three phases, the first being that of the ascendancy of the monarchy and aristocracy which is over, the second that of the *bourgeoisie* which is now coming to an end, and the third that of the proletariat which is to come; so atonal historians are also wont to divide the history of music into three periods, each of about three hundred years' duration, the first being that of the old modal Church music from about 1300 to 1600, the second being that of the tonal secular art from 1600 to about 1900, while the third is destined to be that of atonalism which is now beginning and is, like the two foregoing periods, also destined to endure for a period of three hundred years or so. (What is to happen after that we do not yet know, but the prospect of three centuries of atonalism is surely enough to cause even the stoutest heart to quail.)

No such fundamental issue as this, it will be seen, is involved in the work of any other contemporary

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composer or school of composers: not even in that of the most daringly revolutionary and iconoclastic of them.

It is with a comparatively small group of composers, then, that we are here concerned, consisting of Arnold Schönberg himself, Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Matthias Hauer, and a few opportunists and hangers-on of doubtful antecedents, but it would be wrong to infer that it can be dismissed as negligible for that reason. Not only does it unquestionably comprise several of the most gifted musicians writing at the present time, but the influence, both practical and theoretical, which it exerts, is in inverse ratio to its size and tends, moreover, continually to increase.

The case in favour of atonality is briefly as follows. The steadily increasing chromaticism of the music of the last fifty years or so has at last completely undermined the integrity and sapped the vitality of the old diatonic scale system; melodic intervals and harmonic progressions formerly regarded as unrelated or foreign to the scale have gradually become assimilated and naturalized to such an extent as to assume an importance and a standing equal to that possessed by its original diatonic constituents. The time has therefore now come, it is

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held, to take the final logical step of throwing overboard the last remnants and vestiges of the old order, with its fixed tonic to which all the other intervals were, in their various hierarchical degrees, regarded as related and subservient, and of recognizing the equal status and importance, the absolute validity, of every note in the chromatic scale, both melodically and harmonically. Once this has been accomplished, it is contended, an immense enrichment of resource inevitably follows. As Stein (Erwin, not Gertrude), one of the leading theorists and most brilliant exponents and apologists for atonalism, says in his essay *Neue Formprinzipien*:

‘Whereas the old harmony teaching knew only a few dozen chords which, transposed on to the various degrees of the scale, amount to a mere few hundred, every possible combination of the twelve tones is possible. Hence we dispose of 55 different three-part chords, 165 four-part, 330 five-part, 462 six- and seven-part, 330 eight-part, 165 nine-part, 55 ten-part, 11 eleven-part and 1 twelve-part—altogether over 2,000 chords, and 4,000 when transposed on to other degrees of the semi-tonic scale.’

If Herr Stein’s arithmetic is correct—and I do not propose either to question it or try to verify it—it follows that in theory the atonal composer has at his

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command a very much richer harmonic palette than his tonal rival.

The chief argument in the case against atonality, on the other hand, is that while it all sounds very plausible and even convincing in theory, it fails in practice: that neither Schönberg nor any of his followers has as yet produced a work that has succeeded in appealing to 'the plain man' or average intelligent music lover: that however promising it might appear as a basis or *modus operandi* for the music of the future, it has achieved nothing in the present.

Quite apart from the somewhat questionable assumption that the value of a work of art depends exclusively on the degree of its appeal to a certain arbitrarily chosen and vaguely defined level of intelligence—do Einstein or Spinoza, or Kant or Hegel, for example, appeal strongly to the plain man?—this latter argument is merely a breaking-down of an already opened door; since the apologists for atonality are only too willing to admit that hitherto they have not succeeded in accomplishing the task they have set out to perform. Stein, for example, expressly admits that a wholly satisfactory substitute for the tonal system has not yet been found: that 'the new tone-combinations have the

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capacity to engender great new forms, but not as yet to establish them. They have, in the first place, been in use for too short a time, and their capacities and relative values have not so far been thoroughly tested. Thus in the matter of form we are confronted with a series of transitional phenomena (*Uebergangerscheinungen*)'.

Schönberg himself, moreover, has frequently stated that he does not consider himself to have reached the goal for which he is striving. All that he and his disciples claim is that they are the precursors of a new era, the pioneers in an entirely new direction which is inevitably destined to be that in which the music of the future will develop.

The disputants, in fact, are in complete agreement on this important point, for even those critics who most dislike atonalism as it is at present base their objection to it and their refusal to grant it any artistic merit whatsoever on precisely the same argument that its practitioners bring forward in self-justification: namely, that they are playing identically the same historic role in bringing about the supersession of tonality by atonality as was played at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Florentine experimentalists who similarly brought about the replacement of the old church

modal system by the diatonic major and minor scale system, without themselves succeeding in the creation of any enduring masterpieces.

Unfortunately the analogy is false from start to finish. In the first place the belief that the Florentine experimentalists were in any way responsible for the supersession of modality by tonality is a pure myth, albeit one that is endorsed by most histories of music—mythologies of music would be a more accurate description. The modern major scale had always existed in European secular music, and is to be found long before 1600. Glareanus, for example, in his *Dodecachordon*, written in the first half of the sixteenth century, says that the Ionian mode, as it was called then, is particularly adapted to dances and is to be found throughout Europe. Earlier than that, the famous Reading *rota*, 'Sumer is icumen in', the finest piece of music that has come down to us from the Middle Ages, is written in the modern major scale; and earlier than that even, many of the best melodies of the troubadours. Farther back still, the major scale was known to the ancient Greeks as the Lydian mode, to the ancient Chinese as the *Tchi*, to the ancient Hindus as the *Bilaval*; one finds it in use among the most primitive and barbaric tribes, and specimens of antique Egyptian

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flutes which have been preserved down to the present day conclusively show that it was familiar to the ancient Egyptians also. Indeed, as Dr. Lea Southgate observed in a lecture delivered to the Musical Association in 1891, archaeological research shows that 'long before the Greeks possessed any defined scale at all, the older Egyptians were using every note we employ in our modern music—the intervals they made use of do not differ from those of which our modern highly developed music is compounded'. This may be a slight exaggeration, but the substratum of truth which it contains is enough for our present purpose.

But this is not all, by any means. Just as modern European music is based upon an ossature consisting of the tonic with its two principal harmonic and melodic supports, the dominant and subdominant a fifth and a fourth above, or below, so we find it in every age and in every clime. It clearly underlies the modal art of the Middle Ages, and in Greek music the μέση, as they called their tonic, was A, and 'the body of the harmony' was completed by the addition of an E a fifth above and a fourth below, together with the B a whole tone above.<sup>1</sup> Gevaert,

<sup>1</sup> See Lavignac's *Histoire de la Musique: Grèce*, par Maurice Emmanuel, p. 385 et seq.

in his history of music, shows that the succession of four sounds by conjunct degrees, constituting a tetrachord within the compass of a perfect fourth, is the core of the entire musical system of classical antiquity, and was based by Pythagoras on an ancient Hindu model. This observation is borne out by M. G. Sizes, a French scholar, who has shown in an essay published in the proceedings of the Académie des Sciences in 1917 that the most ancient musical system of which we have any knowledge, derived from a study of Sanskrit manuscripts, was based upon the consonances of the octave together with the fourth and fifth. Gevaert, again, points out that the Chinese musical system does not differ in essentials from the Hindu, and Smith, in *The World's Earliest Music*, writes that 'the Chinese have a system of music essentially the same as the Greeks, and a scale called the *Sheng* consisting of two conjunct tetrachords, the key-note being the fourth of the scale, equivalent to the μέση of the Greeks'. Leroux, in his study *La Musique classique japonaise* (1923), says that the Japanese scale is simply a succession of ascending fifths and descending fourths, and Hornbostel, perhaps the leading authority to-day on Oriental music, sees in this evidence of the influence of the Pythagorean



theories on Japanese music. He even goes further and says that

'the relationship between the Chinese music system and that of Pythagoras is supported by so many close analogies that it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that there is an actual connexion between them. It must be left undecided whether the Greek scholar in the course of his travels to Egypt and the East brought back the basis of his theory ready-made to his own country, or whether we must look for a common origin of the two systems either in India or in Babylon. We shall in either case hardly err if we regard the harmonic music of modern Europe, and the non-harmonic music of modern Japan, as late blossoms of the same tree. . . . The Japanese scale is, like the Chinese, constructed out of two similar tetrachords placed together. . . . A striking similarity exists between European and Japanese music in the relation between the tonic and the other notes of the melody. In both there is a close connection between the tonic and its upper and lower fifth.'

The same writer notes in Turkish music the predominance of the interval of the fourth and, next to it in importance, the fifth. Stumpf, in his *Ton-system und Musik der Siamesen*, tells us that the Siamese method of tuning in fourths leads him to believe that the Pythagorean scale is the forerunner of the Siamese scale.

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The point of all this impressive (I hope) accumulation of musico-ethnological data is merely to show that the fundamental principles underlying musical art are everywhere and in every age identically the same; that, however outlandish and unintelligible it may be to Western ears and according to European standards, as is for example the music of the Siamese, however minute the subdivisions into which a tone can be split up, as in Indian music, the *ossature*, or, as the Greeks called it, 'the body of the harmony', remains the same—the tonic with its octave, and a fourth and a fifth, above or below.

When we consider that this has always been so everywhere it is surely more natural and logical to infer that it will always be so than to suppose that suddenly, about the year 1910, music became something entirely different from what it had ever been before in the history of humanity, as the result of the interesting experiments of a talented Austrian Jew. For it is unquestionable that pure atonality is irreconcilable with the aesthetic and acoustic principles underlying all other musical art since the beginning of time. In no place and in no period of history known to us does absolute chromaticism form the basis of any musical system.

Let us grant, however, for the sake of argument,

that the miracle has been accomplished, that the reign of Paraclete, in the form of Arnold Schönberg, has descended upon us, and that in atonality we are confronted with an entirely new form of art which is destined to be that of the future.

We have seen already that, in theory at least, atonality promises a vast enrichment of harmonic and melodic resource compared with that at the disposal of tonality—roughly speaking, in the ratio of 12 to 7, the number of the constituent notes in their respective scales. In practice, however, it does not at all work out like this. Stein himself lays it down as a necessary condition of the new music that progressions which recall those of the old tonal system must be avoided (*‘Wendungen, die an die alten Tonarten erinnern, werden vermieden’*). In fact the atonal composer, in order to attain to pure keylessness, is compelled to discard from his vocabulary all combinations of tones consisting, not merely exclusively, but even largely, of the formerly diatonic notes of the chromatic scale, comprising no less than seven out of the twelve, be it remembered—otherwise a momentary sense of tonality will inevitably result, and this is what must above all things be avoided.

But it is perhaps in the melodic rather than in the

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harmonic aspect of the problem that the full consequences of this exclusion become apparent. To create a melodic line of any extent in which no succession of intervals gives us even a momentary illusion of tonality is exceedingly difficult. Let any one who doubts this try for himself; he will inevitably find that he cannot let himself go for a single moment without sliding backwards into tonality, and even when he is most successful the result will as often as not give the impression of a diatonic melody merely twisted and gone awry, like a familiar face reflected in a distorting mirror. This impression can only be avoided by consistently relying on the most angular and asymmetrical intervals, in consequence of which a high degree of monotony is inevitably engendered—a monotony which is, moreover, further intensified by the absence of any modulatory interest, for this valuable resource in tonal music is of course automatically ruled out by the substitution of one universal scale for the twenty-four scales of the old system. *La nuit tous les chats sont gris*, and in the drab, uniform colouring of the semi-tonal scale all the constituent notes lose the individual colour, all the light and shade they possess in the broad sunshine of the tonal scale.

Whatever may be said for atonality in theory,

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therefore, in practice it amounts, not to an extension, but rather to a positive restriction of resources; to the substitution of a chromatic tyranny in place of the diatonic tyranny which formerly existed. The point is that there is no freedom under the Schönberg régime. The right to use any and every progression that happens to suit one's purpose is no more recognized or tolerated by it than by the pedants of the old order, who no longer exist. Atonality, in short, as practised by Schönberg, is only a form of inverted academicism; in witness whereof one need only quote his own words concerning the contrapuntal writing in his later works: 'Das ist ganz strenger Kontrapunkt—Konsonanzen sind nur im Durchgang oder auf schlechtem Taktteil.' ('That is strict counterpoint; consonances occur only as passing notes or on the weak beat of the bar'—just an exact reversal of the rules for strict scholastic counterpoint.) Indeed, the champions of atonality could make out a very much better case for it if they were to say precisely the opposite of what they actually say, and, instead of claiming for it an enlargement and enrichment of resources, were to declare rather that music to-day suffers from too much liberty and too great a range of possibilities, leading to anarchy, and that what music needs more

than anything else at the present time is discipline and a deliberate curtailment of resources such as is, in effect, afforded by the adoption of atonality. From that point of view, there is a lot to be said in its favour.

There is, in fact, a more than superficial analogy between atonalism in music and communism in the political world. In the same way that the overthrow of the old régime did not result in greater liberty for all, but in the tyranny of another class, the dictatorship of the proletariat; so in music the supersession of the hierarchic tonal system with its tonic and dominant as king and queen, in favour of a system in which all the intervals are professedly equal, does not in practice result in absolute liberty to write as one chooses, but in a kind of 'dictatorship of chromaticism', so to speak, both melodic and harmonic, and a ruthless suppression of any progression that recalls the old order. Nor does the analogy stop there. If Schönberg might with justice be called the Lenin of music, his most talented follower, Alban Berg, might be called the Stalin; for in his work one finds a distinct tendency to relax the strict proscription of elements which recall the old tonal order, amounting at moments to pure diatonicism, just as with Lenin's successor one perceives clear signs of

compromise with the principles of capitalism. But whether it is possible to reconcile the principle of atonality with the partial re-admission of elements recalling the old order remains to be seen; in much of Berg's work in which he attempts to do so one feels a decided sense of discrepancy between the two elements, and in some places he seems definitely to have reverted to the old order. It cannot at least be questioned that his practice is often in flagrant contradiction to the pure atonal doctrine as promulgated by Stein, the theoretical Marx of the school, which explicitly demands that progressions which recall those of the old tonal system must be avoided. In the eyes of the orthodox atonalists such as Schönberg and Webern the later development of Berg must, one imagines, be exceedingly suspect. It is particularly significant, moreover, that Berg is the only one of the school who has enjoyed a certain measure of popular success and acceptance on the part of the musical public. One will hardly be wrong in attributing this phenomenon to the considerable admixture in his work of features which it possesses in common with music written in the old tonal system. It is as yet too early to say what will be the outcome of this tendency in Berg's work, and his future developments will be watched with interest.

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If Schönberg is the Lenin of atonalism, and Berg the Stalin, Webern is the Trotsky—the most wholehearted, consistent, thorough-going and intransigent exponent of the pure doctrine of the master. No suspicion of compromise with tonality attaches to Webern—even less than to Schönberg himself who, after all, in his earliest works was once a tonalist, whereas Webern seemingly never was. While his idiom and method are even more constrained and restricted in scope than those of his master, so also is the circle of conceptions within which he moves. Even Schönbergian atonalism is too wide a field for Webern; he seems to suffer from a kind of artistic agoraphobia and seeks to confine himself within the narrowest possible limits in every respect. Almost all of his exiguous output consists of tiny little pieces seldom lasting longer than a minute or so, and seldom employing any more powerful dynamic indication than a *pianissimo*—hence the epithet conferred upon him by his admirers: ‘the master of the *pianissimo*.’ Within the limits to which he chooses to confine himself, however, he achieves a singular perfection, a rare, subtle, exquisite, and tenuous beauty of a highly personal order, but not even his warmest admirers are likely to claim for it that it is destined to be the music of the future.



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It should perhaps be made clear that, in likening atonalism in music to communism in politics there is no implication that there is any actual connexion between the two things, but merely suggestive analogies of a purely abstract order. It is no doubt perfectly possible to be a liberal or a conservative in politics and an atonalist in music, although it is true that in Nazi Germany a definite identity has been established between atonalism and what is called *Kulturbolschevismus*, and between both of them and subversive Jewish propaganda. It is certainly remarkable that the originator of atonalism should be a Jew, and that a large number of its most eminent practitioners should be of the same race, in the same way that many of the Bolshevik leaders were Jews. On the other hand, it must be admitted that up to the present the proletariat has shown little enthusiasm for the art of Schönberg, Webern, or even Berg.

Hitherto we have proceeded on the assumption that atonalism constitutes an entirely new departure, a new form of musical art, as is maintained by its most ardent advocates. In theory, and in its ultimate consequences and implications, it certainly is. In its origins and derivations, on the other hand, it is by no means as novel as might be supposed. In order to show this, it will be necessary to examine

the course of development of its initiator, Arnold Schönberg.

An artist's early work frequently provides a surer index to his intrinsic mentality than a late or mature one. In the course of his development he often becomes to a great extent what he wills himself to become, whereas his early or immature work may more clearly reveal him as he actually is by nature, without the deliberate suppressions or involuntary inhibitions which result from the searching self-criticism and discipline of complete maturity. This is particularly true of Schönberg, whose artistic development in recent years has to outward seeming been steadily and increasingly in the opposite direction from that indicated by his early work—to such an extent, indeed, that his later compositions, from the three piano pieces, op. 11, onwards, are commonly supposed to constitute a sudden *volte-face* and a complete break with all that he previously achieved. Yet nothing could be more certain than that the fundamental and essential Schönberg is the composer of the early works, such as the *Verklärte Nacht* sextet and the *Gurrelieder*. This is shown by the way in which, despite the great idiomatic differences between his early and his late work, the same qualities of mind and even the same stylistic

peculiarities persist throughout in spite of himself and every attempt to conceal them. To profess to admire his early work and to dislike his later, as some critics do, or vice versa as others do, is simply to show that they understand neither.

Too much attention, in fact, has been paid to Schönberg's spectacular change of outward manner, and too little to the underlying unity of thought and feeling which persists throughout all the different phases of his creative activity. In spite of their Wagnerian idiom the *Gurrelieder* are as characteristic as any of his later compositions, revealing precisely the same virtues and defects: the same undeniable power and vitality, the same brutality and insensitiveness, the same fertility of resource, the same heaviness and turgidity of texture, which alternately attract and repel one in his later music. Similarly the German romanticism of the first works does not disappear from his later ones, but is merely inverted and reacted against, in a kind of romanticism *à rebours*, just as we have seen his counterpoint is only a kind of inverted academicism.

The immense technical mastery that the early works reveal at once proclaim the presence of a personality marked out for leadership, yet at the same time they show equally clearly that there was

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nothing further to be achieved along the lines on which Schönberg was then proceeding. The idiom and mode of thought one finds there were already completely worked out before Schönberg ever came to them, and there is little, if anything, in his early works, despite their many admirable and impressive qualities, which had not already been said by others before him or contemporary with him. And since it is the one great defect in Schönberg's musical personality that he is unable to transform the ordinary or commonplace, to lend a new beauty and distinction to what, in the hands of others, remain mere banalities and platitudes, it was psychologically inevitable that he should try to strike out a new path and decide that it was 'better to reign in hell than serve in heaven'—better to be master in a world of his own than to remain the mere epigone of Wagner, Brahms, and Mahler that he had hitherto been, and would otherwise be destined to remain.

Hence the new world first entered upon with the three piano pieces of op. 11. But just as the rebellious archangel of Milton looked back regretfully on the paradisal joys from which he had been banished, so we continually find, in the later music of Schönberg, the yearning and nostalgia for the

German romantic heaven from which he had voluntarily exiled himself.

Schönberg, indeed, is the rebellious archangel of music. When Liszt, in his great 'Faust' Symphony, conceived the brilliant idea of depicting Mephistopheles in the last movement not by themes proper to him, but by inversions and perversions of the foregoing material, he anticipated the role that was to be played by Schönberg in the history of the romantic movement in music. Schönberg is essentially uncreative. He can invert, parody, distort, but he has no primal invention. We have seen how his contrapuntal methods are confessedly a mechanical inversion of the methods of the old scholastic counterpoint; similarly the underlying spirit of *Pierrot Lunaire*, perhaps his most successful work, consists in a derisive parody of romanticism.

In many ways he reminds one strongly of Gustav Mahler. Both are Austrian by environment and Jewish by birth, both are products of the same conditions. The only difference between them consists in the fact that whereas Mahler accepted and expressed the spirit of his age, environment, and temperament, Schönberg reacted against it. But it is only a reaction, an inversion of values. Not even the superficial novelty of his later style can conceal

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the fact that at bottom Schönberg is of the same musical race as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and Wagner. Erwin Stein has said of Schönberg that 'in each work he is a new man, and a knowledge of his earlier ones is of no use in helping us to understand his later ones', but the contrary is much nearer the truth: namely, that whatever changes may take place in his technical method of procedure he remains at bottom the same in all his work, and that it is impossible to understand his later work without reference to his earlier.

Schönberg, in short, is at heart a romantic, always has been and always will be. Even the very style itself of his later works, even the whole atonal system, is essentially nothing more than the logical extension of Wagnerian, and particularly Tristanesque, chromaticism. A significant symbol of this derivation is to be found in the employment by Berg, in a movement of his *Lyric Suite*, for string quartet, of the opening bars of *Tristan*, in such a way that one hardly notices the quotation, so aptly does it fit into the atonal context. Again, the theme on which Schönberg's *Variations* for orchestra, op. 31, are built, has definitely romantic and Tristanesque connotations. There are passages also in *Parsifal* which directly anticipate Schönberg both in

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harmonic and melodic idiom, and the little known later piano pieces and songs of Liszt also clearly contain the seed of what was to become atonalism.

From both points of view, then, of underlying thought and outward style, the art of Schönberg is seen to be romantic in its derivation, the last of an old line rather than the first of a new. So far from the truth is the conventional view of it as representing the first tentative and immature steps in the direction of a totally new form of art, which will in time lead to fruitful results, that precisely the opposite is true: namely, that it represents the final phase of the century-old romantic movement, both in ideology and idiom, that it is overripe and *faisandé* rather than green and immature, that in its best manifestations, such as *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Wozzeck*, it is of definite, permanent, aesthetic value as being the vehicle for the personal expression of a few remarkably gifted individualities, such as Schönberg, Berg, and Webern.

In many respects there is a more than superficial resemblance and affinity between Schönberg and Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, the Italian madrigal composer of the beginning of the seventeenth century. Like Schönberg, Gesualdo failed to distinguish himself from his many talented contem-

poraries in his early, comparatively orthodox work, written in the accepted idiom of the period; in it, indeed, he is noticeably inferior to such composers as Luca Marenzio and Orazio Vecchi. And in precisely the same way that Schönberg only attained to individuality and eminence as a result of his adoption of the atonal style, so did also Gesualdo through the means of what is best described as an 'amodal' style—for the strange, tortured chromaticism of the later Gesualdo bears precisely the same relation to the modal art of his predecessors and contemporaries as the later Schönberg does to the tonal art of his. And just as to-day the work of Gesualdo is recognized to possess considerable intrinsic significance as being the expression of a curious and interesting personality, so no doubt will that of Schönberg in the eyes of posterity. But Gesualdo had no successor; the lines along which music developed in the seventeenth century were in the opposite direction to those followed in his work. That the narrow and tortuous path Schönberg has hewn out for himself is destined to be the high-road along which the composers of the immediate future will travel is, to say the least, highly improbable.

Historical precedents, moreover, go to show that



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chromaticism generally constitutes a final and not an initial stage of an epoch. In the same way that the ecclesiastical modal system ended with an 'amodal' phase, so also, as far as can be ascertained, did the music of classical antiquity with a chromatic and enharmonic phase. So to-day the tonal art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comes to a close with the atonality of Schönberg and his followers. Chromaticism in any shape or form has never yet become the basis of any enduring development; as we have amply seen in the present chapter, some form of diatonic tonality is to be found at the base of every musical tradition that has yet existed in the world, so far as we are able to judge, in every age and in every country. That the present and the near future will constitute an exception to this universal rule is wildly improbable, to put it mildly. In so far as atonality is a new departure it seems to stand condemned according to the law and nature of musical art in all ages and in all climes; in so far as it has its roots in the art of the past it is a conclusion, a cul-de-sac, not a beginning.

Apart from these aesthetic and historical considerations, certain practical, material conditions, which have only come into being in recent years, would seem to militate strongly against the survival

of atonalism. The stronghold of such tendencies up to the present time has, not unnaturally, been Germany. In no other country in the world so far has atonality shown the slightest signs of making headway, apart from arousing the interest and curiosity of fellow composers, critics, and the intelligentsia generally—except for Alban Berg perhaps, and this one exception, as we have seen, is probably largely due to his partial abandonment of the strict doctrine of atonality and his compromise with tonality. With the advent of the Nazi régime in Germany, which looks like continuing in the near future, if only because there seems to be no alternative, atonalism has lost its only real audience, and its practitioners have been either banished or silenced. Austria was always hostile to the movement to which she had given birth; the Latin countries are by nature antagonistic to the whole principle of atonality; Bolshevik Russia, despite coincidences and sympathies of doctrine, has shown no sign of welcoming it—no contemporary Soviet composers of note are atonalists, and as we have already observed, the proletariat himself is quite indifferent to it; and neither in England nor in America is there a sufficiently large audience to ensure its continued existence. That Schönberg, Berg, Webern, and a few

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other gifted individuals will continue to write in the style they have created, is undoubted. That they will succeed in establishing an enduring school is unlikely. That it will be the music of the future seems out of the question.

## VIII. NEO-CLASSICISM

WE have seen how all the tendencies with which we have been concerned in preceding chapters constitute the end of an old period rather than the beginning of a new one; the concluding stages of the Romantic Movement rather than the fresh departure which most critics and historians have claimed them to be. We have seen, too, how each of them in its own way ends in a cul-de-sac.

This sense of finality and conclusion is a characteristic feature of most of the music of our period, including even that of many composers who cannot be classified as belonging to any of the foregoing tendencies, or to any determinate tendency whatever. No better example of it could be found than that which is presented by the career of Richard Strauss who, with *Salome* and *Elektra*, self-evidently came to a terminal point, beyond which it was impossible to progress any farther in the same direction. Hence the sudden *volte-face* which Strauss executed after *Elektra*. In *Der Rosenkavalier* he deliberately sets himself to write an opera which should be like Mozart. We are not concerned here with the degree of success which attended his

efforts, but only with the intention, which becomes increasingly apparent in subsequent works, especially *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Strauss, in fact, is the first *pasticheur* in music, the first composer in history deliberately to revert to the ideals or style, or both, of an earlier age.

It is not generally recognized what a very close parallel there is in this respect between Strauss and Stravinsky. Just as Strauss developed rapidly and logically from *Don Juan* up to *Elektra*, and then turned back to Mozart, so did Stravinsky progress from *L'Oiseau de Feu* to the *Sacre du Printemps* and *Les Noces*, and then went 'back to Bach'. And Stravinsky's later works are just as near and like to Bach as *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne* are near and like to Mozart. There is a more than superficial similarity, moreover, between these two terminal points, between *Elektra* and the *Sacre*. Together they constitute the *ne plus ultra* of sensationalism in music, and the final death-dance of *Elektra* is paralleled by the final death-dance of the Elect.

Whatever one's own personal reaction to the *Sacre du Printemps* may be, there is no denying the fact that it is one of the most conspicuous landmarks in the artistic life of our period. It is one of those works which appear from time to time in the

history of art and which seem to reflect and sum up completely the spirit of their respective ages; it is a work that simply had to be written, that would have got itself written somehow or other, one feels, even if Stravinsky himself had never existed, for it expresses exactly and fully the state of mind, the modes of thought and feeling that were characteristic of the younger generation, not only of musicians, but of artists of all kinds, in the years immediately preceding the war. In the early years of the century W. B. Yeats wrote as follows, after seeing the first performance, in Paris, of the *Ubu Roi* of Alfred Jarry, which was probably the first attempt to exploit the cult of the primitive in western European art: 'After Stéphane Mallarmé, after Paul Verlaine, after Gustave Moreau, after Puvis de Chavannes, after our own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, what more is possible? After us the Savage God.' So in music; after the subtle colour and nervous rhythms of Debussy, Ravel, and Delius, what more was possible but the Savage God of Stravinsky?

The *Sacre*, in fact, was what Kant has called an historical postulate. One finds anticipations of it in all the other arts; in the cult of African wood-carvings which began about this time, and in such

pictures as *La Danse* and *Les Capucines* of Henri Matisse painted in 1910, two years before the appearance of the *Sacre*. It was 'in the air', in short, and it just so happened that Stravinsky was there ready at the right moment. In the *Sacre* music takes the lead, as it were, for the last time, and gives the ideal form and expression to what all the other arts were trying to do in their different ways and different *media* at that particular moment of cultural history.

So with the technical procedures and methods of construction employed by Stravinsky in the *Sacre*. His fondness for reiterating interminably the same little melodic phrase with varying rhythmical articulations, which is the keystone of his technical edifice in this work, is the most characteristic feature of the music of primitive races. Again his loudly proclaimed invention of 'rhythmic counterpoint', consisting in the superposition of several strongly contrasted metrical patterns upon each other, is also a feature of primitive music, and of Javanese music in particular, in which it is often developed to a very much higher pitch of subtlety and complexity than in the music of Stravinsky. Similarly, the harmonic method of the *Sacre* is identically the same as that of the earliest form of harmonic writing, amounting to nothing more than

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a modern exploitation of the ancient devices of organum and *faux bourdon*.

So far, then, from constituting an advance in any way, the *Sacre* is probably the most remarkable 'throw-back', the most perfect case of atavism, in the whole history of music. Not, of course, that this is necessarily a fault in itself. A great deal of primitive art, such as the finest negro sculpture, possesses considerable merit, and there is no valid reason why modern work based upon the same principles should not be equally good. But without being a whole-hearted admirer of everything implied by the words culture, progress, civilization, enlightenment, and so forth, it is still surely permissible to question whether it is either necessary or desirable to throw overboard the legacy bequeathed by centuries of artistic development, and to aspire towards the artistic outlook, or to emulate the artistic procedures, of naked savages. An African wood-carving or a Song of Solomon Islands may be excellent things in their way, but it is not our way, and the consequences of 'going native' are apt to be just as unpleasant in art as in life.

The *Sacre du Printemps*, indeed, despite many admirable qualities, is apt to inspire one with much the same feeling of distaste as that with which



Marlow, in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, watches Mr. Kurtz crawling 'to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of weird incantations', drawn by 'the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions'.

The *Sacre*, in fact, represents the *ne plus ultra* of pure and undiluted sensationalism in art: the final stage, beyond which it is impossible to progress any farther, in the same direction as works such as *Tristan*, *Salome*, and *Elektra*. Having thus arrived at a terminal point, Stravinsky was inevitably faced with the familiar alternative of repeating himself or of trying to do something entirely different. In *Les Noces* he accepts the former alternative; apart from the very different medium of chorus, pianos, and percussion, the underlying conception and methods of construction are much the same as in the *Sacre*—the same monotonous little wisps of folk-song which are never developed or combined, but merely repeated; the same metronomic, machine-like rhythms, the same mechanical harmonization. It is not an exaggeration to say that at least half of the score could have been, and probably was, written out by means of the dash with a dot on either side, which is the traditional musical equivalent of 'etc.'

Whole pages on end consist simply of the same bars, or at least the same figures, endlessly and remorselessly repeated, as in the pattern of a wall-paper. Finally, there is not, either in the *Sacre* or *Les Noces*, the faintest vestige of even the most elementary kind of organic construction. Like most Russian art, these works of Stravinsky are built up by means of an accumulation of small and insignificant details; like the Russian language, their syntax is illogical, undisciplined, incoherent; like Russian history, they consist of sequences of unrelated episodes; like the Russian temperament, they have neither stability nor centrality. They are, in fact, typical products of the Russian mind and, as such, whatever their merits, they are fundamentally irreconcilable with the traditional heritage of western music.

After *Les Noces*, whether it was that Stravinsky came to an end of his talent, or whether it was the advent of the Russian Revolution that severed him from the soil and the source of inspiration that his art required, or whether it was simply impossible to progress any farther in the same direction, the fact remains that in these two works Stravinsky said everything he had to say, and since then has been merely obsessed with the desire to do something new, no matter what. The real, the fundamental Stra-

vinsky is to be found in the *Sacre* and *Les Noces*, in the same way that the real and fundamental Schönberg is to be found in the *Gurrelieder* and the *Sextet*. And just as we find the original German romanticism of Schönberg manifesting itself throughout all his later developments, so does the primitive Russian romantic nationalism of Stravinsky persist behind the superficial façade of western classicism which he has set up in recent years.

The very suddenness of his conversion from the ecstatic frenzies of the *Sacre* to the austerities of the music of his later period is somewhat suspicious. In an essay contained in his volume entitled *Die Einheit der Musik*, Ferruccio Busoni relates that Stravinsky once expressed to a common friend his contemptuous surprise at learning that he, Busoni, cherished a deep admiration for the German classical masters. The latter replied by telling the story of the Shah of Persia who, when on a visit to London, was asked how it was possible that his fellow countrymen could be sun-worshippers; to which he retorted that if his questioner had ever really seen the sun he might then understand how it was possible to worship it; in other words, if Stravinsky had known or understood anything about the music in question, he would probably have admired it equally! Yet

within only a very few years of this little exchange of compliments, we find Stravinsky writing music in a style and forms demonstrably based upon or derived from those of the despised classics.

M. Boris de Schloezer in his monograph on Stravinsky seeks to explain this erratic behaviour, and to establish a logical nexus between the primitive nationalism of his earlier works and the sophisticated neo-classicism of the later ones. He positively revels in the task, and performs prodigies of dialectic valour which would do credit to a lecturer in Hegelian metaphysics at a Scottish university, even if at times his logic bears a suspicious resemblance to that of the Red Queen or the White Knight in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-glass*.

According to this writer it is precisely because Stravinsky is so typically Russian that he has classical aspirations and affinities: 'Être occidental pour un Russe, c'est obéir à l'une des traditions fondamentales de sa race, de son pays.' The more characteristically Russian an artist is, in fact, according to M. de Schloezer, the less difference is there between him and western Europeans, and the most typically Russian art is that which is most strongly imbued with classical influences. In support of this

paradoxical contention he points to the western elements in the art of Pushkin, Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Turgenev, and others, and to the Empire style of architecture, based upon Graeco-Roman principles and models, which flourished in St. Petersburg under Alexander I. Such things as these, he claims, represent the authentic Russian spirit. The semi- or pseudo-orientalism which we ignorant foreigners have imagined to be typically Russian is deliberately cultivated, and has precisely the same exotic appeal for Russians as for us. Consequently, when Stravinsky tries to write in the style of Bach or Handel or Gluck or Pergolesi he is thereby showing himself to be a true Russian.

That there is a certain modicum of truth in this, despite its obvious extravagance, may be readily admitted. A considerable proportion of Russian art and thought has always been western in its aspirations, just as there has always been another that has been eastern; the one symbolically represented by St. Petersburg and the other by Moscow. (By a curious paradox, however, in Russian music the focus of the western influence was Moscow, and of the eastern, St. Petersburg.) And it is certainly true that many, perhaps most, cultured Russians prefer the comparatively westernized art of Pushkin or

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Glinka to that of Dostoevsky or Moussorgsky, and actually consider it more representatively Russian.

But the real truth of the matter is surely that the essence of the Russian spirit is neither occidental nor oriental, but something *sui generis*, distinct from both alike. To take a good illustration: what is essentially Russian in the music of Borodin is neither the pseudo-oriental element, nor the recognizably Italian operatic element, but something entirely separate from both. Russia, in other words, is a continent to herself, neither European nor Asiatic, though sharing certain characteristics with both. The occidentalism of the later Stravinsky, in fact, so far from being a natural and spontaneous product, as M. de Schloezer would have us believe, is no less exotic and artificial than the orientalism so often encountered in Russian art. In precisely the same way, in fact, that Russian imitations of eastern music are notoriously unlike the real thing—as any Oriental will tell you—and only exploit a few external traits and superficial mannerisms, so in the would-be classical compositions of the later Stravinsky one finds only an imitation of the outward forms and technical procedures of eighteenth-century European music. Classicism, indeed, has for Stravinsky much the same attraction that the bar-

baric and the primitive have for us—the attraction of the unfamiliar and the exotic. His admiration for the procedures of the classical masters is essentially of the same order as the savage's admiration for the top-hat and umbrella of civilized man. His former contempt and his present admiration, indeed, are both equally the consequence of unfamiliarity with their object—he has never really seen the sun, to revert to Busoni's simile.

Incidentally, M. de Schloezer's comparison of Stravinsky's neo-classical works with the classical Empire style of Russian architecture is singularly apt and illuminating, though perhaps not quite in the way that he intends. In the first place, relying upon his readers' ignorance, he omits to mention the awkward fact that all the great architects of this admittedly impressive school of architecture were foreigners. Vallin de la Motte, Thomas de Thonon, Richard de Montferrand, were Frenchmen; Rinaldi, Quarenghi, Brenna, Rossi were Italians; Cameron was a Scotsman. Even the few members of the school who were actually Russians—and they are all among the less important, such as Bajenov, Kazakov, Voronikhine, and Zakharov—studied abroad, chiefly in Paris, and were consequently Russian practitioners of a foreign style, and not

members of an authentic Russian school at all. This architecture, in short, can no more claim to be considered Russian than the Italian school of opera in the eighteenth century in England can claim to be considered English. There is nothing Russian about it whatsoever.

In the second place, just as the builders of these grandiose edifices were compelled, in default of marble and stone, to construct their Graeco-Roman arches and columns out of brick and painted plaster, so Stravinsky, while observing the general forms and structural principles of the great classical art of the eighteenth century, is unable to provide the thematic material they demand—the marble and granite out of which Bach and Mozart wrought their works, the musical substance, in fact, which itself conditioned these very forms in the first place and constituted their sole *raison d'être*. The consequence has been that while the intrinsic beauty of the Parthenon survives to-day in spite of the ravages of time and man, and while the masterpieces of Bach and Mozart continue triumphantly to defy all changes of fashion and taste, the classical buildings of old St. Petersburg, after only a comparatively few years of neglect, became unsightly piles of discoloured brick and peeling stucco; and a similar fate



awaits the pseudo-classical constructions of Stravinsky.

The two most essential qualities for a great classical art are precisely those in which Stravinsky is most completely lacking—the power of melodic invention and of formal construction on a large scale, and they are the two things in music which cannot be successfully counterfeited.

How far removed these later works are from the true classical spirit may be seen by comparing them with the standards set up by M. André Gide in his *Réponse à une enquête de 'La Renaissance' sur le Classicisme*, reprinted in his volume of essays entitled *Incidences*.

'Le vrai classicisme n'est pas le résultat d'une contrainte extérieur. . . . Il me semble que les qualités que nous nous plaçons à appeler classiques sont surtout des qualités morales, et volontiers je considère le classicisme comme un harmonieux faisceau de vertus, dont la première est la modestie. . . . Le vrai classicisme ne comporte rien de restrictif ni de suppressif; il n'est point tant conservateur que créateur; il se détourne de l'archaïsme. . . . J'ajoute que ne devient classique qui veut; et que les vrais classiques sont ceux qui le sont malgré eux, ceux qui le sont sans le savoir.'

Classicism is not the result of external constraint; the neo-classicism of Stravinsky is. The first of

classical virtues is modesty; Stravinsky, to put it mildly, is not exactly distinguished for his possession of this quality; apropos of his *Persephone* he declared categorically that his music cannot even be criticized, it must simply be accepted, for there can be no question but that the path he has chosen is the right one, the only possible one. True classicism restricts and suppresses nothing; the neo-classicism of Stravinsky is hedged about with restrictions and suppressions and taboos of every kind. True classicism avoids archaism, Stravinsky cultivates it:— in *Pulcinella* the style of eighteenth-century *opera buffa*, in the Piano Sonata that of Haydn and early Beethoven, in *Oedipus Rex* that of Gluck and Handel, and in most of his later works we find palpable imitations of the manner of Bach. Finally, as M. Gide pointedly remarks, it is not enough to wish to be classic; the true classical artist is one in spite of himself and without knowing it. Stravinsky, on the contrary, is one by conscious deliberation, and is only too well aware of it.

The cult of the pastiche, incidentally, is by no means confined to Stravinsky, but is one of the most familiar features of recent developments in music. As in ancient times old men, and those prematurely aged through excesses of every kind, believed that

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they could recapture their lost vitality by means of contact with robust adolescents, so modern composers, exhausted by a century of ever-increasing sensationalism, seek to absorb new life and creative vigour through association with or imitation of the serene and unsophisticated art of the past. The prevalent cult of the pastiche, in fact, is simply a form of artistic vampirism, and what strikes one most forcibly in listening to or studying music of this type is the curious combination which it exhibits of purely external and factitious life, with an unmistakable inner deadness. It lives with a borrowed vitality which will not bear close inspection. Drive the stake of analysis and criticism through its heart and it straightway ceases to exist.

The fact of the matter is that the neo-classical movement of to-day is an entirely artificial thing: a pious aspiration, a consummation devoutly to be desired, but not an actuality. Its supporters everywhere, it will be noticed, are critics, pamphleteers, and propagandists rather than creative artists, and in so far as the latter take part in the movement, their contribution consists in talking and theorizing about neo-classicism rather than in producing examples of it.

This alleged neo-classical movement, incidentally,

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has been going on very much longer than most people suppose. Already as early as 1914 Mr. T. E. Hulme prophesied that 'after a hundred years we are in for a classical revival'. Mr. Wyndham Lewis, writing twenty years later, in his *Men without Art*, observes ruefully:

'Well, I suppose we have had it, or are having it. By its works it is none too easy to tell it for such. By the words of its critical and apologetic utterances we know it is classical certainly, but not by what it does by way of illustration. . . . To be impersonal rather than personal; universal rather than provincial, rational rather than a mere creature of feeling—those and the rest of the attributes of a so-called "classical" expression are very fine things indeed: but who possesses more than a tincture of them to-day? It would be mere effrontery, or buffoonery, in an artist of any power amongst us to lay claim to them, to say that—"as an artist I am a classicist". With all of us—and to this there is no exception—there are merely degrees of the opposite tendency, at present labelled "romantic".'

Mr. Lewis's testimony on this point is particularly valuable and weighty in that he is himself one of the most consistent and determined antagonists of romanticism at the present time. It must be remembered, moreover, that he is here speaking primarily of literature and the plastic arts. What he

says is all the more true of musical neo-classicism, seeing that music is, as we have already had occasion to observe, the romantic art *par excellence*, and is consequently to a great extent doing violence to its innermost nature in attempting to realize the classical ideals. If the neo-classical movement has failed in the other arts—and surely Mr. Lewis is right in holding that it has—*a fortiori* it must almost necessarily have failed in music, the artistic citadel of the romantic values.

It is with genuine regret that one is compelled to admit that it is so, for nothing would be better for all the arts to-day, even including music, than a rigorous course of classicism. Even a confirmed romanticist must admit that the existence of the opposite principle, and even its occasional ascendancy, is necessary to a state of aesthetic health just as in politics a strong opposition party constitutes a psychological necessity for a good government. In the same way, indeed, that even the most enthusiastic supporter of Cambridge must wish occasionally that Oxford might win the boat-race, if only for once, just for a change, so the romanticist must feel that things have been going far too consistently and far too long in his favour, and would welcome a momentary reversal of values, if only as a salutary

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corrective, so that romanticism itself, which to-day has self-evidently run somewhat to seed, may ultimately emerge purified and strengthened.

M. Paul Valéry, most distinguished of living French poets, has given what is probably the most convincing definition of the antithesis of romanticism and classicism that is to be found anywhere, in his preface to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, where he says that

'both are phases essential to the development of art, the romantic phase being the colonization of new territory, the classic being its economic development and perfect organization. Every classic implies a pre-existent romanticism. Classicism is reflection following upon inspiration, selection upon receptivity, order upon disorder; and this process is apparent in the life of every artist who lives long enough to find himself.'

The history of all the arts, considered as a whole, *sub specie aeternitatis*, can to a great extent be conceived and represented as a kind of Ormuzd and Ahriman struggle between these two opposing forces, first one being in the ascendant and then the other, the alternation taking place, roughly speaking, about every hundred years. The nineteenth century was by general consent a romantic period, whereas the eighteenth was predominantly classical in its

outlook. Similarly it is true to say that the preceding century was a romantic period, for the baroque ideals were only one temporal expression of the predominance of emotion over intellect, content over form, expression over thought, and colour over design, which the world has agreed to call romantic. Again, the age before that, the age of the Renaissance, was likewise a classical period, and so on.

In conformity with this regular systole-diastole oscillation it is only natural to suppose that the twentieth century will once again be a period in which the classical ideals will be predominant. Nothing, moreover, could be more certain than that at the present time in music we stand at the end of a phase of colonization, to use M. Valéry's simile, and that the time has come for its economic development and perfect organization. The history of music in the last hundred years has been one of continuous idiomatic expansion on a scale and at a rate hitherto unknown, accompanied by an increasing disorder and formlessness amounting to veritable anarchy.

The classical spirit, moreover, is eclectic and cosmopolitan rather than national or provincial; and, for better or for worse, as we have seen, the period of nationalism in music is over. The classical spirit

is fundamentally opposed to the cult of originality, and consists rather in universality and impersonality of outlook; and we have seen that the conception of art as a means to the expression of one's individuality belongs to the preceding generation rather than to this one.

Every consideration in fact, points to the conclusion that we are on the eve of some kind of classical revival. But one thing seems fairly certain, and that is, if ever it does make its appearance, it will not in any way resemble the present neo-classicism, which is only classic in outward appearance, and inwardly betrays the fact that it is all a product of exhausted, renegade revolutionaries seeking for a new thrill, another novel sensation, on the one hand; and of time-serving opportunists, determined to be in the latest fashion, on the other. 'As an artist I am a classicist', proclaims Mr. T. S. Eliot, but all his work contradicts him and proclaims him a peculiarly neurasthenic and sentimental romanticist with only a nostalgic yearning for what are to him the inaccessible splendours of true classic art. M. Jacques Maritain in his curious work on aesthetics, *Art et Scholastique*, assures us that 'tous les gens bien aujourd'hui demandent du classique'—all the *best people* to-day, Modom, are asking for the classic—



and goes on to cite Erik Satie as the finest possible example of what he means by classicism—‘*je ne connais rien dans la production contemporaine de plus sincèrement classique que la musique de Satie*’. The conjunction of Satie and sincerity and classicism is almost too good to be true.

But even in so far as such ‘classicism’ as that of Eliot or Satie is sincere, it is vitiated by its self-consciousness and artificiality. It is only the outward manner, the fashionable dress that is worn by the ‘best people’, underneath which beats unmistakably the unregenerate, decadent, romantic heart. A true neo-classicism on the contrary, would be more likely to reveal itself as a new spirit interpenetrating the old romantic syntax, for this is how all new movements in art-history begin—with a change of mind first, rather than of manner, of thought rather than of language. Finally, classicism, when it comes—as it undoubtedly will come, sooner or later—will be positive and progressive, not negative and reactionary. It will not ‘go back’ to Bach, or Mozart, or any other past synthesis, but forward to a new one. Ultimately, indeed, the nostalgic yearning for the past, which characterizes the whole neo-classical movement in all the arts, is as subjective, sentimental, and even romantic, as

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the longing to be back in Dixie, or Kentucky, or Tennessee. 'So I'm going Bach to Mozart', &c. And in the same way that atonalism possesses many features analogous to those of communism in the political sphere, so neo-classicism is in many respects the artistic equivalent of Fascism, and is essentially a reactionary movement.

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THE cardinal implication which clearly emerges from the foregoing examination is that fruitful developments in music in the future are unlikely to occur along the line of any '-isms', and, least of all, of any I.S.C.M.s; by which is meant the annual ugliness contests which take place under the auspices of the International Society for Contemporary Music, at which the home-selected Miss France, Miss England, Miss Czechoslovakia, Miss Hungary, and the rest, compete for the suffrages of a motley, cosmopolitan gathering of grey-bearded, bald-headed, ear-trumpeted, bath-chaired revolutionaries of the pre-war era, still searching avidly for yet another new thrill, and blissfully unaware of their senility and superannuation.

But although all these schools and tendencies and movements may have failed to provide us with any positive data concerning the probable 'shape of things to come', we are in possession of a certain amount of negative data which may lead to certain tentative conclusions. Let us recapitulate all our findings up to date.

In the first chapter it was concluded that, con-

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trary to current fashionable opinion, there is no more reason to suppose that modern civilization has run its course, and that we are faced with an imminent and ineluctable relapse into barbarism, than there ever has been at any other period of history; that if such a catastrophe takes place it will simply be due to our own fatalistic inertia and not to any external cause.

In the second chapter this conclusion was followed up with closer reference to art, and it was suggested that even if to-day we are living in the old age, evening, or winter decline of a culture, there is nothing in this to prevent the emergence of a form of art as great as, though assuredly very different from, that of any other period.

In the third chapter an attempt was made to show that just as architecture was the archetypal art of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, sculpture that of the succeeding period, then painting, then literature; so music was the archetypal art of the nineteenth century, the one to which all the other arts aspire. And since this order of precedence among the arts throughout the centuries seems to be fairly constant and to constitute an unending cycle, so far as we can judge, and in view of contemporary developments and symptoms, it was suggested that everything

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points to the recurrence in the immediate future of architecture as the leading art, the one which imposes its values and ideals upon the others.

In the fourth chapter the geographical incidence of great artistic achievements was discussed, and reasons were given for the supposition that a race which excels in the visual and spatial arts at a given moment of its history is unlikely—apart from isolated individual geniuses, the advent of whom obviously cannot be taken into consideration in this connexion—to excel simultaneously in the aural or temporal arts. As a consequence of this observation, which is supported by a considerable volume of unassailable historic fact, in combination with the working of the law of averages and other considerations, it was suggested that the chief developments in musical art in the near future might reasonably be expected to occur in England and in other countries which had either not recently, or never, made any musical contribution of importance.

In the fifth chapter it was shown that nationalism as a source of or incentive to musical creation was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, and that the conditions which gave rise to it are no longer in existence. It was consequently concluded that the art and music of the immediate future would be of

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a more pronouncedly eclectic and cosmopolitan character than that of yesterday, or even of to-day.

In the sixth chapter it was similarly shown that the cult of individualism of thought and originality of expression was also that of a period which is already past, and that the art of the coming age was likely to be of a more objective and impersonal nature than that of its predecessor.

In the seventh chapter the claim made on behalf of atonalism, that it was destined to be the musical idiom of the future, was examined and discussed, and reasons were given for concluding that, so far from being the beginning of a new form of art, as both its advocates claim and its opponents tacitly concede, it is rather the final phase of the Romantic Movement, and a cul-de-sac in which, however, a few gifted individuals have achieved a notable personal expression which will probably endure.

All these conclusions, pointing to the emergence of a music dominated primarily by architectural conceptions, cosmopolitan rather than national, objective and impersonal rather than subjective and individual, tonal rather than atonal, seemed to indicate some kind of classicism as exemplifying the most likely aspect of the music of the future; and in the eighth chapter the contemporary self-styled

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neo-classical school was discussed but found to be negative and artificial rather than positive and spontaneous, reactionary rather than progressive, and devoid of any creative vitality.

At the same time it was allowed that some form of classicism was not merely desirable but inevitable in the near future; a century of intensified romanticism had self-evidently come to a full close and, by the unescapable law of reaction, was bound to give place for a time, at least, to the opposite tendency. Busoni, in an open letter addressed to the German musical critic Paul Bekker, which appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in February 1920, and was reprinted later in his volume *Die Einheit der Musik*, proclaimed the proximate advent of a '*Junge Klassizität*', which he proceeded to define as consisting in, amongst other things,

'the mastery, the selection, the exploitation of all that has been positively accomplished in the course of recent experimentations, and its embodiment in solid and beautiful forms. . . . As part of this new classicism I postulate a definite abandonment of thematic methods of construction, and the restoration of pure melody to its rightful position of sovereign over all the parts and determiner of all developments, as bearer of the idea and begetter of the harmony—in short, the most highly developed polyphony.'

Another no less important condition demands 'the elimination of mere sensuousness and the renunciation of subjectivity . . . the reconquest of serenity: not the set mouth of Beethoven or the "liberating laughter" of Zarathustra, but the laughter of wisdom, of Godhead. . . . Not deep thoughts, or messages, or metaphysics, but pure music, distilled, never under the mask of symbols or abstract concepts. . . . Human feeling—though not human pettinesses—and even this expressed strictly within the measure of artistry, which consists not merely in a sense of proportion, in a recognition of the limits of the beautiful and in sureness of taste; but it also signifies above all that an art must not undertake tasks which lie outside its nature (for example, in music, description).'

The extent to which Busoni was able to realize this aesthetic programme in his actual work must remain a matter for dispute. In any case this book is not so much concerned with the assessment of purely aesthetic values as with tendencies and movements abstractly considered. But whatever the ultimate value of Busoni's music may prove to be, at least the significance of his historic role as the prophet and pioneer of a new classicism in music cannot be questioned. For it need hardly be pointed out that the above proclamation anticipated by several years the first so-called neo-classical works and theories of Stravinsky and others.



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We shall hardly be wrong, in view of all the foregoing considerations and the conclusions to which we have already been independently led, if we regard this utterance of Busoni as constituting a prescient forecast of the nature of the music of the immediate future. Let us therefore proceed to develop the principles set forth in this aesthetic programme, and seek to determine the consequence of their application to the various separate aspects of musical art—melody, harmony, rhythm, form, colour.

Romanticism, we have seen, is essentially a process of exploration, conquest, and colonization of new territory; classicism primarily consists in its orderly development, cultivation, organization, and consolidation. During the last hundred years the history of all the arts, but more particularly of music, has been one of rapid and unending expansion up till the present time. So far as music is concerned it is safe to say that it is impossible to go any farther in the direction of idiomatic expansion. There is nothing more to be discovered; there are no longer any fruitful innovations to be made. Harmonically speaking, all semitones in the chromatic scale have been sounded simultaneously; melodically speaking, all conceivable intervals have been taken in succession; rhythmically speaking, every kind of metrical

scheme has been freely employed; colouristically speaking, every register of every conceivable instrument has been systematically exploited and modified artificially by means of mutes, and *con legno*, *sul ponticello*, and so on, for strings.

Self-evidently, in fact, nothing further remains to be done in the direction of idiomatic innovation in music with the exception of the employment of quarter-tones or other minute subdivisions of the semitone. This has, of course, been attempted in our time, with a conspicuous lack of success, by Alois Haba and others, in the same way that it was attempted, with the same result, in the last decade or so of the sixteenth century by Nicolo Vicentino. In fact, if Gesualdo was the Schönberg of the modal system, as has been suggested, Vicentino was the Haba; the parallel is singularly complete. The fact that the experiment failed then and has failed now is no proof positive that it must always continue to fail, but it seems fairly safe to say that no such development is likely to take place in the immediate future, which is all that we are concerned with here.

The one element in the musical synthesis which has, however, been conspicuously neglected by composers of the romantic period, is that of form. In this respect there is nothing in the music of the

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various schools we have been considering to compare with the work of the great classical masters.

Since, then, there is nothing left to accomplish in the direction of further experiments or extensions of capacity in either melody or harmony, rhythm or instrumentation, it follows that the task of the coming generation will be that of synthesizing and integrating all these new accessions of resources, incorporating whatever has been found to be valuable and enduring in recent experiments, discarding everything that has not—and building them up into solid, organic forms such as those encountered in the work of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, but in that of no composer since Beethoven up to the present day. And the kind of form which is most likely to characterize this art is architectural form, for architecture, as we have seen, seems destined to be the archetypal art of the immediate future.

In this new musical synthesis, as Busoni has emphasized, the element of primary importance will be melody on a large scale—melodic as opposed to thematic construction. It cannot be denied that in the last hundred years or so, in spite of the undoubted enrichment of resources that has taken place, the tendency has been consistently away from the construction of melodic lines of *grande envergure*,

and in the direction of increasingly short, pregnant thematic germs which are developed symphonically.

The most perfect example of this tendency is, of course, Wagner, and his admirers have been at great pains to establish the infinite superiority of brief striking thematic fragments over large-scale, symmetrical melodies. Mr. Bernard Shaw, for instance, in *The Perfect Wagnerite*, maintains that the real test of musicianship is to invent short thematic fragments and develop them symphonically, and that inferior composers can only invent symmetrical tunes; and in proof of this he adduces the undoubted fact that where 'tune-turning', as he contemptuously calls the latter faculty, occurs in *The Ring* 'as in Siegmund's spring song and Mime's croon "Ein zullendes Kind"', the effect of the symmetrical staves, recurring as a mere matter of form, is perceptibly poor and platitudinous compared with the free flow of melody which prevails elsewhere'. To-day, however, we are coming to see that the more likely explanation of the phenomenon is, not the inherent superiority of the Wagnerian method of composition, but the fact that Wagner was unable to write tolerable melodies on a large scale. It is not as if he never tried to do so, or only fell back upon it in moments of flagging inspiration as

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Mr. Shaw implies; on the contrary, not merely are his early works full of such attempts, but also the late *Die Meistersinger*, and it would be difficult to say which is the more complete failure, the trite and vulgar 'Star of Eve' in *Tannhäuser* or the broken-backed, spavined 'Prize Song' in the latter work, surely one of the worst tunes ever written.

It is no part of our present purpose to reverse the process and proclaim the superiority of large-scale melody over short thematic fragments; each has its place and its very different purpose, and the one is not necessarily inferior to the other. But while it may be true that Wagner's more inspired pages of symphonic weaving are better than most of the tune-turning of, say, Auber, they are inferior to the symmetrical melodic writing of Mozart. And if it is true that Bellini, for example, was incapable of writing in the style of *Die Götterdämmerung*, so Wagner was equally incapable of writing 'Casta Diva' in *Norma*.

However that may be, this steadily increasing predilection on the part of modern composers for ever shorter segments of thematic material has resulted in the aural equivalent of myopia on the part of most musicians and listeners; they have become incapable of taking in, or sustaining attention

in, any melodic line, whether symmetrical or not, which is of larger dimensions than two bars or so. The consequence has been that a composer such as Berlioz, who is a striking exception to the general tendency of his age in this respect, as in others, has been reproached with a lack of melodic interest, whereas he is actually one of the greatest melodists not merely of his century but of all time, in the eyes of the few people left who have sufficient melodic sense to earn the right to express an opinion on the point. As he himself says in his *Mémoires*, his melodies are often on such a large scale that 'an immature or short-sighted musical vision may not clearly distinguish their form—shallow musicians may find them so unlike the funny little things which they call melodies that they cannot bring themselves to give the same name to both'. In the same way, in fact, that Gulliver was unable to appreciate the beauty of the Brobdingnagian woman on account of his excessive smallness or her excessive largeness, only seeing her imperfections magnified and not her person as a whole, so our modern critical Gullivers, with their microscopic vision, can only see the, to them, apparent coarseness and unevenness of skin, so to speak, of Berlioz's Brobdingnagian melodies, and not the majestic propor-

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tions of the complete organism. At the same time, the asymmetry of most of his finest melodic inspirations prejudices Berlioz in the eyes of those for whom a real melody can only consist in regular groups of four, eight, and sixteen bars.

If I have dwelt at some length on the melodic writing of Berlioz it is because it seems as if his example is likely to exert a powerful influence on the immediate future. Classicism in all the arts is distinguished primarily by its preoccupation with linear beauty, and in music by the predominance of melody over all other elements. Hence the new classicism, of which the approaching advent is heralded by Busoni, will, as he says, inevitably be characterized by the abandonment of minute thematic snippets in favour of a more sustained form of melodic writing. At the same time, it is hardly to be expected that this new classicism will rival the old in the construction of symmetrical melodies consisting of regular four-bar periods. Many, perhaps most, of the greatest melodies ever written are so built, and many no doubt will continue to be so built in future, but it is impossible not to feel that the day for such things is, generally speaking, over for the time being at least, and that the music of the immediate future is more likely to be characterized

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by a form of melodic writing which can only be described as prose melody, as opposed to what we may call the poetic melody of the past: consisting, not in symmetrical groups of four bars and their multiples, but in irregular groups, or in no discernible groups, of bars, and even written without regular barring at all. The melodic writing of Berlioz, alone among the great masters, provides an anticipation of this development which, incidentally, is one naturally to be expected. For in the same way that the earliest form of literature was poetry, prose being only a comparatively late development, so we find that up to the present time the greater part of music has conformed to what has been called the poetic type, while the prose of music has only begun to manifest itself quite recently.

In one important respect, however, the music of Berlioz is unlikely to provide an index to the future. In proclaiming the supremacy of melody over all other elements, Busoni suggests that the new classicism will take the form of a highly developed polyphony, and this is, of course, at the opposite pole to the art of Berlioz which is always at bottom strongly homophonic.

The assumption that Busoni is right here is borne out by the observations of a German musicologist



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Alfred Lorenz who, in his *Musikgeschichte im Rhythmus der Generationen*, shows musical history, so far as we know it, to consist in a succession of alternating periods of roughly three centuries each, dominated in turn by the contrapuntal and homophonic, horizontal and vertical ways of thinking. The period from 700 to 1000 he shows to have been primarily dominated by the polyphonic ideal; that from 1000 to 1300 by the homophonic ideal. 1300 to 1600 was once more a polyphonic period and 1600 to 1900 another homophonic one. He concludes from this that to-day we stand on the threshold of a new phase of contrapuntal or polyphonic ascendancy.

But even apart from such historical and theoretical considerations there are in addition purely practical reasons for supposing that it will be so. Ever since the days of Rameau, who declared that 'it is harmony, not melody, that guides us', and that no music could sound well unless it was governed by purely harmonic considerations, the element of harmony has tended gradually to outweigh more and more all the other elements in music—a tendency which reaches its conclusion and *non plus ultra* in the music of such composers as Debussy and Delius which, one feels, might easily retain the

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major part of its appeal even if every trace of melody and rhythm were eliminated from it. But even in the work of others who do not go to quite the same extremes, one is conscious that the melodic line is primarily determined by the harmonic progressions, and indeed emanates directly from them. Even the polyphony of the later Wagner is only a pseudo-polyphony, a cunning sophistication of blocks of chords which are broken up into parts which merely give the superficial illusion of independence.

Music, in fact, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, was demonstrably labouring under a hypertrophy of harmony, and the undue dominance of this one element over all the others. The reaction to the opposite tendency and the revival of a more pronouncedly polyphonic conception and style of writing was not merely inevitable, but has long been overdue.

The chief vice to which the obsession with the harmonic aspect of music leads is what one might call the 'added note' tendency, which consists in the practice of supplying to a chord accessory or supplemental notes which do not originally form part of the chord, in order to enrich the harmonic effect. The process would seem to have begun with the

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note popularly known as the 'added sixth' which, as the term suggests, implies the addition of the major sixth to the common major triad. The next step in the process was the addition of the major second, either with or without the sixth as well; and then the major seventh. Eventually the habit became universal of using the entire diatonic scale as a common chord, and this accordingly lost all piquancy, recourse being had to the addition of chromatic notes as well. The logical continuation of the process, which, like that of drug-taking, demands a constantly increasing dose, was the employment of note-clusters, consisting of groups of adjacent semitones hanging together on one stem like bunches of raisins. The final stage in the process is reached by taking a chord, adding adjacent semitones to each constituent note, taking away the harmony you first thought of—and the answer is later Bartók.

This again, like so much in modern music, is self-evidently a cul-de-sac; it is impossible to go any farther in this process of 'gingering up' the harmonic interest. In any case one's palate has become so jaded with these everlasting spices and condiments that the only real thrill left to one is that of hearing a plain common chord.

This particular form of harmonic excess, inciden-

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tally, is not a new thing. There are several instances of it in the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, and there is a little-known treatise by an anonymous hand in the Corsini Library in Rome, dealing with the art of providing an accompaniment to a melody upon a figured bass, which suggests that the same kind of thing was a commonplace at the time when the treatise was written—i.e. about 1700.

Here is a specimen of what the author recommends as 'il suonar pieno', saying that 'si è messo grandemente in uso hoggidi'.



Such added notes he likens to 'un picciol morso d'animaletto'—the nibbling of a little animal—but even to modern ears attuned to such things it seems more like having one's head chewed off by a more than usually voracious tiger. Incidentally, the fact that this method of filling out a figured bass at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries was, as our author says, a common procedure, suggests that modern reconstructions of the music of this period are all wrong, and

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err gravely on the side of too great timidity. Such things represent the final phase of baroque just as in modern times they represent the final phase of romanticism—and baroque and romanticism are in essence very much akin. Such procedures entirely disappeared shortly after this treatise was written, when baroque gave way to rococo, and the figured bass to the system of complete and explicit notation. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the modern equivalent of this practice is equally destined to pass away with the advent of the new classicism, and especially with the cleansing and purifying influence that contrapuntal writing invariably exerts upon harmonic texture.

In contra-distinction to, and largely, no doubt, as a direct consequence of, the vast expansion of harmonic resource which took place during the last century, the more specifically rhythmic aspect of music did not merely remain comparatively undeveloped, but actually retrogressed. The rhythmic interest, indeed, of the music of the romantic period is very much slighter than that of any preceding period, with, once more, the same one notable exception, Berlioz, the freedom, spontaneity, and daring of whose rhythms are admitted even by his detractors. For the rest the most representative

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composers of the age were singularly timid and backward in this important respect, and seldom ventured far away from the symmetrical four and eight bar period, and intricate but always regular subdivisions thereof. Wagner is, of course, the greatest offender in this respect; he himself admitted that his rhythmical invention left much to be desired. He even seems to have had difficulty in conceiving music in ordinary triple metres; in *Lohengrin*, perhaps the most flagrant example of Wagner's rhythmic poverty, it is difficult to find even a single bar of three-four or six-eight.

This stagnation, or rather decadence, of the rhythmic sense during the nineteenth century has been carried right up to the present time, the culminating point of the process being the *Sacre du Printemps* of Stravinsky, considered by its admirers to be the apotheosis of rhythm, whereas it is actually its very negation and denial. Rhythm here has simply degenerated into metre, which it inevitably must do when divorced from melodic implications and regarded as a self-sufficient entity.

It is a curious fact, already observed and commented upon in *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, that the more primitive the rhythm, the more 'vital' it is acclaimed to be.

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'When we speak of melodic beauty we do not mean by it the ceaseless alternation of two or three notes, nor when we wish to give an example of exquisite harmony do we bring forward the earliest examples of organum; but as soon as one speaks of rhythmic vitality it always seems to be taken for granted that one implies a simple metrical pattern such as we find among the most primitive and uncultured races. . . . It is indisputable that the rhythmic interest of the *Sacre* is on the same level as, and no higher than, the harmonic interest of the compositions of Hucbald, and the melodic interest of psalmodic intonation.'

The final Dance of the Elect is a good example of this. At first sight it gives the impression of terrific complexity, with alternating bars in constantly varying sequences of two, three, four, and five sixteens; but the complexity is apparent to the eye only, not to the ear, which perceives only the incessant repetition of the same little metrical phrases with irregularly recurring caesuras. The complexity, in fact, exists merely on paper, as is shown in practice by the reading of Serge Koussevitsky, who ignores the composer's indications and, instead of beating sometimes two, or three, or four, or five in a bar, simply beats a regular and consistent up-and-down—to the composer's great annoyance, so we are told, and we can well believe it and understand it.

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The effect in performance, to the ear, is the same, but it certainly 'gives the show away' rather badly.

Here again the contrapuntal or at least polyphonic bias of the new classicism as forecast by Busoni, and shown to be imminent by so many other historical and aesthetic considerations, will surely exercise a salutary influence; for contrapuntal and rhythmic vitality are up to a point synonymous—at least one cannot conceive the first without the second. Similarly, the rhythmic stagnancy of most nineteenth-century music is primarily traceable to its predominantly harmonic and vertical bias.

The essence of classicism, it has already been observed, is admitted to consist above all in the ascendancy of linear and formal interest, that of romanticism in the ascendancy of colouristic considerations. If our conjecture concerning the nature of the music of to-morrow is correct, it naturally and inevitably follows that the cult of colour for colour's sake, which has been so strongly in evidence in modern times, is destined to give place to a more austere conception and treatment of this element. Within the last century instrumental colour has come to play an increasingly large role in the composer's thought, until to-day it is almost a point of honour for him to proclaim that his ideas



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come into his mind in such close association with the instrumental medium that it is impossible for him to think of them separately. In the music of the romantic period, in fact, and consequently in most of that of modern times, the instrumental colour is an intrinsic, essential, and indissoluble part of the conception; in classical music precisely the contrary is true, that the conception exists in the abstract, so to speak, and is only ultimately embodied in instrumental form. Frequently indeed, perhaps generally, it can find equally adequate embodiment in wholly diverse instrumental *media*. Bach is, of course, the best example of this tendency in the past. He would frequently transmute a violin concerto, for instance, into a piano concerto without thereby impairing the essence of the thought. In most modern music this would be impossible, but it is more than likely that a reversion will occur in the near future to this tendency towards abstraction which Busoni has called the *Entindividualisierung* of instruments—the destruction or the minimization of their distinctive characteristics by writing for them ‘gegen ihre Natur’, as means to the expression of musical ideas which are independent of any specific tone-quality or combination of instruments, for this is of the very essence of classicism. And

once more, counterpoint self-evidently constitutes the most powerful incentive to abstraction of this kind, for the individual parts are to a great extent compelled to develop logically without taking into account the limitations, whether of compass or tone-colour, of instruments, and the texture is conditioned more by considerations of organic necessity than by those of mere sound for its own sake.

This tendency towards abstraction, moreover, it need hardly be said, goes hand in hand with Busoni's primary condition concerning the nature of the new classicism which is to come, namely, that it shall be pure music, devoid of any admixture of pictorial description or literary intention. This may at first sight appear to constitute a contradiction of what was said earlier in this book, that the classical conception of the arts, both in ancient and in modern times (i.e. during the Renaissance period and the eighteenth century) regarded music as ancillary and subservient to literature. But it is not so in reality. While demanding that music should be a *ῥηδυσμα* or 'flavouring' of the words with which it is associated in song or drama, and while condemning pure instrumental music as decadent and meaningless, it was not suggested that the music should illustrate or, as it were, reduplicate the words, but merely

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that it should express or underline their sentiment and emotion, which is a very different thing. And while the narrowly classic view is certainly invalidated, in so far as it condemns pure instrumental music, by the fact that many of the greatest achievements in the art in modern times are entirely dissociated from words, it has at least this justification that, in practice, description and illustration mostly occur in music that is independent of words, in purely instrumental music which seeks to achieve what, in the classic view, only words could achieve. It is the absence, in fact, not the presence of words, that most commonly leads to tone-painting. What Busoni, in fact, condemns and specifically excludes from the new classicism as he conceives it, is instrumental description, not the expression of sentiment and emotion which, on the contrary, in common with his classical forerunners, he admits to be an essential function of the new classical music that is to come.

So far from it being true, indeed, that Busoni regarded the association of music with literary conceptions as detrimental and to be avoided, the contrary is rather the truth; namely, that he regarded opera as one of the highest, if not the very highest, of musical forms. As he points out in his *Vorwurf*

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*eines Vorwortes zur Partitur des Dr. Faust*, opera is the one musical form in which every possible medium can find its place and opportunity: solo voices of every variety separately and in ensemble, choral writing and every conceivable orchestral form from the simplest march or dance to the most intricate contrapuntal structure; embracing every mode of expression, from dramatic recitative to lyricism, and from lyricism to symphonic development, and every dimension of design from fresco to miniature. On account of the enormous scope and variety of treatment thus afforded by opera, Busoni was of the opinion that, so far from being effete and outworn as many people believe to-day, opera is, on the contrary, destined to become the chief and most universal form of musical art in the future—as, indeed, it has so often been in the past.

It certainly cannot be disputed, whatever the fanatical purists may say against it, that there is probably a larger amount of great music written in operatic form than in any other. The history of music in the seventeenth century is almost entirely the history of opera; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it is very largely so. Even to-day it is likely that the works of Strauss which have the best chance of ultimate survival are his operas, and

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that *A Village Romeo and Juliet* is Delius's best work; many people would say the same of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and it certainly is true of Berg's *Wozzeck*—to mention only a few representative modern composers more or less at random.

More than that, it has probably always been so. The combination of music and drama which is called opera is not by any means the comparatively recent invention that it is commonly supposed to be. Indeed, the idea that it suddenly came into existence about the year 1600 in Florence as the result of the experimentations of a group of aristocratic dilettanti, is one of the more baseless myths in musical history; modern opera is in reality only one particular temporal aspect of a form of art which has existed from the earliest times in every part of the civilized and uncivilized world. The mystery play of the Middle Ages was to all intents and purposes nothing but sacred opera, and Greek drama, it is well known, was indissolubly associated with music throughout the period of its highest development. The gradual separation of the two elements, which begins with Euripides, so precisely coincides with the decadence of Greek drama that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the two phenomena are closely interconnected. In China no record of anything in the

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nature of a stage play can be traced until the first half of the eighth century, when the Emperor Ming Hung of the T'ang dynasty founded an academy known as the 'Pear Garden', in which a company of three hundred performers was personally trained by him for the production of what can only be called operas, in which the music, moreover, was the predominating factor. To this day there is no independent literary drama of any importance in China; the words are invariably sung to recitative, with more definitely melodic passages when special stress is desired for the heightening of emotion or the conveyance of philosophic truths.<sup>1</sup> Similarly in Japan the celebrated classical *Noh* plays are simply operas in which the sung portions of the libretto constitute the most important element; the written text of these dramas is called *utai*, which means 'piece for singing', and it is significant to note that although some two hundred of these *Noh* plays are still in existence, in no single case is the name of the author known, but in most cases the name of the composer of the music has survived.<sup>2</sup> In India, too, the earliest acted representations known to us were religious plays in which scenes

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Ridgeway, *Drama and Dramatic Dances*.

<sup>2</sup> See Lloyd, *Notes on the Japanese Drama*.

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from the legend of the god were enacted in song and dance.

These are only a few examples, which could easily be multiplied, showing the utter baselessness of the common assumption that opera is the illegitimate fruit of the union between two separate arts—music and drama—or that it is in any way ‘descended’ or ‘derived’ from drama. It is, on the contrary, an independent, autonomous form, and actually a very much more venerable and authentic one than drama itself. Indeed, so far from opera being a bastard offspring of drama, the precise contrary is very much nearer the truth, namely that drama is merely a truncated and degenerate form of opera—continually, moreover, and insistently, calling out upon its lost partner, music, to come to its rescue in moments of supreme stress and urgency. Consider, for example, how frequently Shakespeare invokes the assistance of music at the emotional climacteric of his action, as in the ‘Willow Song’ in the last act of *Othello*, ‘Take, O take those lips away’ in *Measure for Measure*, in the numerous lyrics for music in *The Tempest*, and, indeed, everywhere in his work. It is interesting and significant to note, moreover, that this demand for music on Shakespeare’s part tends constantly to increase throughout

his career until it reaches a climax in one of his last works, *The Tempest*, which is practically an opera without music—a libretto in search of a composer.

This characteristic is not confined to Shakespeare; all the great dramatists share it. Webster in his *Duchess of Malfi*, Shelley in *The Cenci*, Goethe in *Faust*, to name only a few prominent examples, all alike summon music to their aid at the supreme moments of their respective masterpieces. Even in such a comparatively base form of art as the popular melodrama it is interesting to observe, in the soft music which habitually accompanies its intenser moments, the instinctive recognition of the power of music to underline and accentuate the dramatic situation.

The greatest achievements in drama, in fact, imperiously demand the collaboration of music in order to fulfil themselves. A distinguished literary critic, Mr. Arthur Symonds, in his *Studies in Seven Arts*, even goes so far as to suggest that music is an infallible test or touchstone for dramatic excellence.

‘I can hear a music as of Mozart coming up like an atmosphere about Congreve’s *Way of the World* as easily as I can hear Beethoven’s *Coriolanus* overture leading into Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*. Tolstoi’s *Power of Darkness* is itself already a kind of awful tragic music;



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but would all of Ibsen go quite well to a musical setting? Conceive of music and Dumas *filis* together, and remember that, rightly or wrongly, Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* has only succeeded on the stage since it has been completed by the musical interpretation of Debussy.'

In the second tale of the first day in the *Decameron* Boccaccio recounts the story of a devout Jew of Paris who, on visiting Rome for the first time and witnessing there the iniquity and corruption of the prelates and princes of the Church, was straightway converted to Christianity: since, said he, the religion that could survive and even flourish in spite of such abominations as those he had seen must surely be the one and only true faith. Similarly, it might be said that the strongest possible argument in favour of opera is that it continues to survive and flourish notwithstanding all the seeming absurdities and imperfections of the form and the flagrant abuses of both musical and dramatic propriety to which it has often given rise, and in spite of all the violent and ostensibly justifiable attacks that have been made upon it by many of the most distinguished writers and thinkers in every age. It might also be observed that despite the emphatic disapproval of aesthetic purists there is hardly a composer of eminence who

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has not at some time or other succumbed to its fascination and sought to express himself in operatic form. Such exceptions as there are will generally be found to have at least toyed with the idea of doing so, and only to have been deterred therefrom by their inability to find a libretto suited to their taste or requirements.

In view of these facts it is only reasonable to infer that in spite of everything that can be brought against opera—its unreasonability, artificiality, illogicality, financial impracticability, and so forth—it satisfies some imperious aesthetic need of humanity which no other form of art can satisfy. Only thus can be explained its long and impressive history, going back to the very beginnings, its continued existence in the present, and consequently its destined survival in the future. More than that; the fact that opera, or music in combination with the drama, is of all musical forms the one most closely in accordance with the classical aesthetic, would seem to suggest the probability that it will be one of the most important—if not the most important—of all musical forms in the immediate future.

It need hardly be said that the specific tendency which opera will follow in this event will be in precisely the opposite direction from that of the

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romantic music drama of Wagner, with its scrappy *leitmotiv* system, homogeneous texture, predominantly orchestral interest, and 'unending melody' which, as its earliest critics rightly saw, is no melody at all. It will revert, to some extent at least, to the set forms and independent structures of the older classical opera, the interest will shift back from the orchestral pit to the stage, and vocal melody will be the paramount consideration.

It will not have escaped the attentive reader—if any such has progressed so far—that the crux of the problem which confronts our hypothetical, Busonian, new-classical composer is the difficulty of reconciling the polyphonic principle, which is of central importance in the new synthesis, with the classical forms. Polyphony in its essence is a nordic, romantic creation; the music of the southern, Latin, classical races has always been predominantly harmonic and homophonic, and in no form is this antagonism to polyphony more marked than in that of symphony or sonata—the classical form *par excellence*. That a reconciliation is not impossible, however, is shown by some of the later work of Mozart—such things as the last movement of the great C major Symphony and the 'Magic Flute' Overture—and the last string quartets and piano

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sonatas of Beethoven. But it is possibly the polyphony of Palestrina, especially that of the master's final period, in which one finds a perfect equality and even flow of all the parts together with an almost complete elimination of mechanical, canonic, labour-saving devices, that points most clearly to the art of the future. Here is music that is melodic, and polyphonic, and classic, and architectural, full of human sentiment yet always free from description or tone-painting of any kind—the absolute equivalent and realization, in terms of the past, of the ideals formulated by Busoni in the foregoing pages. It need hardly be said, I hope, that this is not meant to suggest that the composer of to-morrow is likely to start writing music like that of Palestrina—the cry of 'back to Palestrina' would be no less ridiculous or futile than the 'back to Mozart' or 'back to Bach' of recent times—but merely that the aesthetic ideal embodied in his music has perhaps more in common than any other in the past with that of the new classicism of the future.

Whatever may be the future of symphonic form, however, one thing is tolerably certain if the above ideals are realized, and that is, that the symphonic poem form, which is the most distinctive and characteristic form of the romantic nineteenth century, is

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doomed to complete eclipse, for it constitutes the absolute embodiment of all the contrary ideals; and the same holds good of all its derivatives, in song, opera, and chamber-music: exemplified by the songs of Hugo Wolf, the symphonic style of Bruckner and Mahler, and the programmatic chamber-music of Schönberg and others.

Finally, the new classicism, when—or if—it comes, will be distinguished by its relative accessibility in comparison with the art which has preceded it. Of recent years, indeed, the appeal of the most representative modern art, literature, and music has been steadily diminishing up to the point at which the artist's audience has almost come to consist in a few initiates or disciples merely; in some recent cases it would even appear that he has created for his own personal satisfaction alone, so esoteric and alembicated is the utterance. Mr. Constant Lambert, commenting on this state of affairs in his book *Music Ho!*, suggests that this process is likely to continue and to become even more intensified in the future, resulting in the virtual extinction of what he calls the 'middlebrow' composer, and the sharp separation of music into the unpopular and high-brow on the one hand and the popular and low-brow on the other, with nothing between. But here,

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it seems to me, he falls into the error of taking it for granted that as things are to-day so they will be to-morrow, only slightly more so, and of failing to allow for the inescapable working of the law of reaction. Now the essence of classicism lies in accessibility, wide appeal, even popularity; it is romanticism that emphasizes the difference, the singularity, the personal element, that which separates the artist from his audience instead of that which unites them. The great classic artist, moreover, does not disdain to entertain and amuse the public; the great classical masters have always been ready to write popular music. The phenomenon, then, of the audience consisting in a small and constantly decreasing circle of connoisseurs on the one hand, with the untutored mob on the other, is essentially the product of romanticism; and the extreme pitch to which this tendency has attained in recent years is only one more symptom of what has already been diagnosed as the final stages of romanticism precedent to a period of classicism.

It will perhaps be remembered that in earlier chapters of this book and elsewhere—in *A Survey of Contemporary Music* and *The History of Music*—it was suggested that music is the romantic art *par excellence*, the art in which, more than in any other,

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what we agree to call the romantic values find their most complete and perfect expression. It would therefore seem to follow that the proximate ascendancy of the more specifically classic values must inevitably entail a sterilizing and inhibitory influence upon the art of music.

This is certainly true, but only up to a point, for, as we have seen, if our conjectures are correct, it is architecture which is destined to be the dominant or key-art of the immediate future; and architecture is, of all the arts, the one in which is best reconciled into a unity the eternal antithetic duality of classicism and romanticism. Architecture, indeed, stands in closer relation to music than any of the other spatial or visual arts and, indeed, shares with it many aesthetic qualities, as has been realized and expressed in the well-known dictum quoted earlier to the effect that architecture is a frozen music. The corollary, that music is molten architecture, provides the best possible index to the nature of the musical art which is to come, if the course of reasoning and deduction followed in the preceding pages should prove to be accurate.

The suggestion that architecture was likely to be the key-art of the immediate future, it will be remembered, was arrived at first through the theory, set forth

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in the third chapter, of the supremacy of the various individual arts in a definite succession throughout the centuries, first one then another taking the lead in a regular sequence. The probability that architecture will be the leading art during the coming period is, however, further strengthened by other considerations arrived at independently in the succeeding chapters. In the first place, it is of all the arts the least nationalistic, and this may well be one of the reasons to account for its almost complete creative eclipse during the whole of the nationalistic nineteenth century; in the second place, it is the most collective, communistic (using the word not in its narrow, political sense, but in its widest signification), and impersonal of the arts, affording little or no scope for the expression of the artist's individuality, and almost demanding anonymity as a condition of its existence—in proof of which is the fact that we hardly know the names of any of the world's greatest architects; in the third place, it is essentially the art of synthesis, standing at the border-line between the romantic and the classic values, at the point at which, to use the words above quoted of M. Paul Valéry, the phase of the colonization of new territory passes over into the phase of economic development and perfect organization.



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The art we are led to visualize, then, is one neither classic nor romantic, but partaking of the attributes of both; monumental in style, cosmopolitan in idiom, communal in thought, impersonal in expression, organic in form, with every part, every detail, every note even, discharging its function, strictly subordinate to the whole.

Finally, it will have been observed that the composer of the recent past—and by recent is meant within the last century—whose name is most frequently mentioned as being of particular significance in respect of the music of the future as here conceived, is Berlioz. This may perhaps appear somewhat surprising, in view of the great extent to which his art derives from and belongs to the Romantic Movement, with the cult of colour for its own sake, the frequent pictorialism, the inveterate subjectivity, and all the other romantic stigmata which characterize his best-known works. It is becoming increasingly recognized to-day, however, that these particular aspects of Berlioz's music are only a superficial cloak to the essentially Latin classicality of his genius, revealed more particularly in his later works, and especially in *Les Troyens*, probably his greatest and most characteristic achievement; and that in his development he happily illustrates that progression

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described by M. Valéry in the passage quoted in the last chapter: 'Every classic implies a pre-existent romanticism. Classicism is reflection following upon inspiration, selection upon receptivity, order upon disorder; and this process is apparent in the life of every artist who lives long enough to find himself.' Apart from this, however, in all his work, both early and late, the essential stuff of his music—melody, harmony, and rhythm—shows him to have been profoundly at variance with the tendencies of his age: hence the neglect and misunderstanding of his art which has prevailed up to the present day, and is only now passing. And if, as I have sought to show, the Romantic Movement ends in a cul-de-sac, it is only natural that the one great master of the nineteenth century who stood apart from the rest, and followed an entirely different path, should be the one whose promise to futurity seems to-day to be greater than that of any of his contemporaries or immediate successors.

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SINCE all schools, movements, tendencies, and 'isms' generally, have failed to show a form of musical art which points forward to the future, it will perhaps be profitable to examine the work of those contemporary composers who seem to stand apart from them, or who cannot easily be classified or pigeon-holed as belonging exclusively to any one of them, in order to see whether there is in it anywhere some fruitful anticipation of the art of tomorrow. Chief among those in the ranks of the older generation is Richard Strauss, who certainly cannot be described as either a nationalist or an individualist or an atonalist, and although it is true that, as already observed, he was probably the first tentative neo-classicist, he can hardly be said to be a member of the school so described.

Mr. Ernest Newman, in his monograph on Strauss published in 1908, proclaimed the subject of his book to be 'by far the most commanding figure in contemporary music', and one who 'has put into music a greater energy, a greater stress of feeling, and a greater weight of thinking, than any other composer of the day'. This flattering judgement

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represented fairly well the consensus of authoritative critical opinion at the time when it was written, and even for some time before and for some time after as well. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that for a quarter of a century, from about 1890 until the war, Richard Strauss, more than any other composer, was the acknowledged master of modern music.

There are few people now, outside the musical no-man's-land which is Germany to-day, who would still maintain that view. The very strength of his appeal to the pre-war generation inevitably conditions the weakness of his appeal to that of to-day. The fact that he was the typical representative of his age, which is now long past, and the anticipator of much in the subsequent age, which is rapidly passing, is in itself enough to render it exceedingly improbable that his work will influence to any great extent the course of development that music will follow in the immediate future. In particular the crude descriptive realism of all his work up to and including *Elektra*, and the late-romantic vice of demanding ever greater material resources, are in themselves enough to preclude the possibility that his music will exercise any decisive formative influence on the art which is to come.

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Out of date and old fashioned though it may be in many ways, his work is of interest and significance in at least one important technical respect. Strauss must be conceded to have been a pioneer in a direction which may be of considerable moment in time to come: namely, in the employment of the resource known as 'polytonality', or the writing in two or more keys simultaneously.

In itself, of course, polytonality is no new thing. Darius Milhaud, in an essay published some ten years ago, quotes from a canon written by Bach in which the two parts are in definitely separate keys throughout; and even the very first fugue of the *Forty-eight* provides instances of its employment. Even the medieval device of organum, it need hardly be pointed out, consists in nothing else than in the writing in two keys at once. The fact that it is no new thing in principle, however, so far from being a fault is a positive virtue. In art nothing which is pure innovation has any enduring vitality. But where Strauss does seem to have been an innovator is in his application of the principle, not merely to two or more melodic lines, of which many examples can be found in the music of the past, but to harmony as well. Not merely was he the first composer to make extensive and systematic employ-

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ment of this device, but he still remains to-day its most successful practitioner, particularly in certain passages in *Salome* and *Elektra* which have never been excelled or even equalled by any subsequent imitator. The sure calculation of ear and scrupulous regard for the combination of sounds viewed vertically, which Strauss exhibits in such passages, are in striking contrast to the mechanical and insensitive exploitation of this resource by later composers, such as Darius Milhaud, for example. With Strauss it always sounds perfectly logical and satisfying in performance, however crude and perverse it may sometimes appear on paper or when played on the piano, by reason of his marvellous sense for orchestral values.

While Strauss's mode of thought and style generally are outworn and have no longer any significance, it is more than probable that in this one respect at least he will exert a powerful influence on the future.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton once observed that to commit bigamy or polygamy at least implies an almost exaggerated respect for the institution of matrimony, and stands at the opposite pole to the practice of 'free love'. In the same way it might be said that the practice of bi-tonality or polytonality, so

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far from showing a disregard for the principles of tonality, indicates rather a profound respect for them and stands at the opposite pole to atonality. It is certainly true of Strauss, who, in spite of his frequently daring experiments in polytonality, has always held atonality in deep aversion; in witness whereof there is his celebrated dictum concerning his young colleague and compatriot Paul Hindemith: 'he has talent; why, then, does he want to write atonally?'

Actually, however, Hindemith was never a consistent adherent to the doctrines of Schönberg. His atonalism is never free from the suspicion of compromise with tonality, and generally gives one the impression of having been originally conceived tonally, and then twisted or distorted so as to acquire the semblance of atonalism. It is not so much in no key at all as that it progresses rapidly from one key to another without ever stopping in one, which is a very different thing. Even in this respect his later works show a marked recession and an increasingly tonal feeling.

It is not, then, as a representative of the atonal school that Hindemith primarily claims attention, but rather as the imitator and principal exponent of what he has called *Gebrauchsmusik*, by which is

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meant music written for a definite purpose in just the same way that chairs are made by a carpenter or boots by a bootmaker. To compose music in order to express one's personality or private feelings is, according to Hindemith, an outworn and demoded relic of romanticism which should be entirely done away with.

There is certainly much in this view that is sympathetic, as constituting a wholesome reaction against the overweening egotism of so many contemporary artists, who seem to believe that the registration and communication of their every little private emotion or sensation is of paramount importance to the rest of the world. Moreover, this conception of the artist as a kind of superior tradesman who exists simply in order to supply a definite demand to the best of his ability is one which would probably have been endorsed by many great artists. Shakespeare, for example, and many great painters—especially portrait-painters—would almost certainly have subscribed to it, and it is undeniable that a considerable part of the output of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, even Beethoven—of most great composers, in fact, up to and including Sibelius—was written to order and would never have been written otherwise. We have already seen, moreover, that in the



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same way that liberty of personal expression belongs to an age that is already past, and no longer corresponds with modern reality or even ideality, in the political world, so in the world of art there can be detected a strong reaction against the conception of a work of art as the expression of the artist's personality. In this respect, therefore, it might seem reasonable to infer that the music of Hindemith provides a significant index to the probable nature of the music of the future.

Again, many critics have been struck by the very obvious and clear parallel which exists between the music of Hindemith and modern architecture and interior decoration, with its bareness and austerity of line, the deliberate avoidance of sensibility, and the sacrifice of merely decorative elements to purpose and function. As Mr. Constant Lambert writes in his *Music Ho!*, 'Listening to his firmly wrought works we seem to see ourselves in a block of hygienic and efficient workman's flats built in the best *Modernismus* manner.' And since, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, it seems probable that architecture will be the leading art in the immediate future, and that the other arts will accept its values and aspire towards its condition, it might be plausible to assume that the music of Hindemith

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constitutes an anticipation of the music of the future in this respect also.

The music of Hindemith, in fact, with its combination of anti-nationalism, anti-individualism, anti-sentimentalism, with its materialism, efficiency, machinism, and ferro-concrete architecturalism, is in all essentials the musical counterpart to the visions of the future life on earth imagined and portrayed by Mr. H. G. Wells in his prophetic romances and by Mr. Aldous Huxley in his satire *Brave New World*.

Precisely because it corresponds so closely with what is confidently anticipated, however, one doubts whether in fact it will so turn out. Such a vision of the future as that of Mr. Wells and Mr. Huxley is too suspiciously of the kind, to which allusion was made in an earlier chapter, which consists 'in taking something that is "going strong", as the saying is, and carrying it as far as imagination can stretch'. In other words, the music of Hindemith probably represents an exaggeration of present tendencies rather than an anticipation of future ones. To suppose that it is destined to be the music of the future is to assume that the future will be like the present, only more so—it is to fail to allow for the workings of the law of reaction, for the one thing which one

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can be sure will always change with each successive generation is the so-called 'spirit of the age'. The music of Hindemith, in fact, is such a perfect caricature of the contemporary *Zeitgeist* that we can be fairly certain that, if only for that reason, it is unlikely to be the music of the age which is to come.

As for his theory of *Gebrauchsmusik*, while it constitutes a salutary reaction against the excesses of individualism, like all reactions it goes too far to the opposite extreme in denying that art should express the personality of the artist. Admittedly, the great masters of the pre-romantic period wrote most of their work to order, in response to a definite demand, but this did not prevent them from expressing themselves at the same time, either in the very works which they wrote to order or else in others which they wrote for their own personal satisfaction; and it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that Hindemith's specious theory is only another variation on the old familiar gambit of attempting to disguise one's deficiencies by representing them as virtues, and by representing the qualities one does not possess as undesirable or contemptible. For in nothing that Hindemith has ever written, even before he promulgated his *Gebrauchsmusik* theory, can one find the faintest trace or vestige of anything resembling a

personality. Even his recent *Mathis der Maler*, which seems to have been written for his own satisfaction and not in response to a commission, is, despite its considerable merits, entirely empty of individuality. Incidentally, there is surely an element of comic irony in the present situation of this apostle of the doctrine that the artist only exists in order to satisfy a social need, like any tradesman, since the community in which he finds himself will have nothing to do with him or his wares, and compels him to fall back for inspiration on his own non-existent fantasy and to write music for which there is no public demand. It is true, of course, that this ironic circumstance is due mainly to political exigencies for which the unfortunate composer can hardly be blamed. A more valid objection to the theory of *Gebrauchsmusik* consists in the fact that no one in any country, except a few fellow craftsmen, has the slightest interest in or desire for the art of Hindemith. He is in the position of a carpenter, indeed, who makes chairs that are so uncomfortable that no one wants to sit on them and no one wants to buy them. The only *Gebrauchsmusik* that has any validity as such is simply popular music—‘giving the public what it wants’, in fact. But this is just what Hindemith does not do.

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To conclude: the music of Hindemith is a perfect expression and artistic counterpart of the period of 'mechanics, science, and wealth' which, as we have seen, succeeds a musical period and precedes an architectural one in the history of a culture, constituting a kind of aesthetic interregnum. His art is a form of musical engineering which lacks the material justification and *raison d'être* of engineering proper.

It would be difficult to imagine a more striking contrast than that which exists between Hindemith and Béla Bartók; the only characteristic they possess in common is a capacity for outraging and enraging the man in the street to a greater extent than any other modern composers. They are, indeed, the two most unpopular composers of modern times with the average listener, except, perhaps, for Schönberg.

The music of Hindemith, it was observed, is essentially cosmopolitan and anti-national in tendency; that of Bartók, on the contrary, is firmly rooted in the soil of his native Hungary. Hindemith is always completely impersonal and objective in outlook; Bartók is always highly individual and subjective. Hindemith's style in all his music is remarkably consistent and homogeneous, and his numerous works are apt to give the impression of

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being lengths of the same material cut off according to the requirements of the moment; Bartók's style changes from work to work and varies according to the instrumental medium in which he happens to be working at the time—in Cocteau's words, he has style rather than *a* style. Hindemith appears to be, but is not, a genuine atonalist; Bartók does not appear to be, but is—not in the theoretical sense in which Schönberg and his followers are, but through his acceptance in practice of the principle of absolute equality of all intervals and all progressions, without excluding those of a tonal and diatonic order. Bartók, in fact, might seem at first sight, and in a superficial view, to be a kind of epitome of all the '-isms' to which allusion was made in previous chapters, with one important exception, neo-classicism. Nowhere in his work is there a suggestion of pastiche, of the imitation of the style or outlook of earlier composers.

But while he certainly partakes to some extent of the characteristics of each of the other various tendencies enumerated, Bartók cannot be subsumed under any single one of them, or even regarded as a synthesis of them all. The nationalism of his mature work is not primary or essential but only incidental, neither does he employ folk-songs as his

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thematic material—apart, of course, from his many folk-song arrangements, but this is not the same thing. His individualism is not exclusive or consciously cultivated, and at the same time one feels in all his work, despite its frequent changes of style, an underlying unity—none of it could have been written by any one else. His atonalism, as already observed, is genuine in its impartiality and inclusion of the most disparate elements ranging from simple diatonics to complex chromatics, yet he achieves a homogeneity of style which one would naturally expect to be unattainable by means of such fearless eclecticism.

The consequence is that one does not feel with Bartók, as one does with most other modern composers, that he is in a cul-de-sac or that he is following a road which leads nowhere. He has explored many by-paths, but he has never got lost in them and has always known how to find his way back again to the highroad.

At the same time one is reluctantly compelled to confess that in recent years his development has been something of a disappointment. He does not seem to have borne out his early promise. It is, indeed, curious to observe how Bartók, after having attained to absolute mastery and independence in the early

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piano music, written mostly in and around 1908—the first string quartet, the *Images* and *Portraits* for orchestra—would seem in later works to have come under the influence of Stravinsky to some extent—i.e. the Stravinsky of the *Sacre* and *Les Noces*—and exhibits in particular the same predilection for the incessant repetition of the same figurations over a large number of bars, in a vertiginous crescendo which culminates in a nerve-shattering climax. As a matter of fact, Bartók actually does this kind of thing very much better than Stravinsky, with an infinitely more resourceful musicianship.

It seemed for a time as if there was nothing further to be expected of Bartók, and that he had gone the same way as most of his colleagues; for the lack of staying power, the inability to progress and develop steadily from work to work, is a characteristic common to most modern composers. This curious condition of artistic possession, however, of a distinguished artist by a lesser one, would seem to have come to an end. The influence of Stravinsky is not apparent in the most recent works, yet at the same time he does not seem to have regained his own personality, but to have become obsessed by still another alien if unidentifiable one, chiefly characterized by an insatiable appetite for unrelieved



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dissonance of the most exacerbated variety. His fourth string quartet is a particularly painful example of this. The unending sequence of discords consisting of practically no other intervals than minor seconds is, apart from anything else, as monotonous as an unending string of common chords, except for the added nervous exasperation.

An exceptionally grim passage characteristic of this tendency is encountered in the second movement, in which the three upper strings, in double-stopping, play respectively the three adjacent major triads of C sharp and A, C natural and A flat, B natural and G (in the treble clef), while the 'cello, playing on its top string, contributes the intervening B flat. This chord is repeated eighteen times. The effect is, of course, excruciating and could never be anything else; for although it may be perfectly possible to write a chord comprising even all twelve semitones of the chromatic scale which will nevertheless fall comparatively agreeably on the ear if the constituent notes are disposed to that end, one cannot imagine the human ear ever becoming reconciled to a harmonic aggregation consisting simply of seven adjacent semitones sounded together. It is simply untrue, in fact, that, as many optimistic modernists maintain, the human ear can be induced

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to tolerate, and even to enjoy any discord, however acute, provided one has time and opportunity to become accustomed to it. There are definite limits to what the ear can endure, and Bartók in his later work frequently oversteps them. The proof of this is to be found in the fact that one Leo Ornstein was writing dissonances of this type, consisting of fistfuls of adjacent semitones, in the years before the war, more than twenty years ago, and they still sound as horrid to-day as they did then. It is equally certain that in twenty years time these discords of Bartók will be as unendurable as they are now. It will be interesting to see whether Bartók will duly emerge from this phase of sadistic obsession with discord, in the same way that he has outgrown his former obsession with Stravinsky; or whether he is destined to be the last of the revolutionary 'old guard', consuming his great gifts in a vain attempt to extract still one more violent new sensation from the exhausted romantic impulse. For it is a fact that practically all his former surviving colleagues and co-workers have now been converted to neo-classicism, or else are adherents of the inverted academism of the atonal doctrines.

But even if he never does emerge from the *impasse* in which for the moment at least he seems to be

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confined, he has already achieved several works which are not only masterpieces in their own right, but also point forward to future ones, whether by himself or by others. With all his faults Bartók possesses creative imagination to a higher degree than almost any one else writing to-day, and this supreme quality is latent in everything he does, however disappointing the actual result may be. The fact that his gifts seem often wrongly applied does not lessen, but rather enhances, the significance of his work for the future; it seems always to reach out beyond itself, as it were, constituting a stimulus and an inspiration for his successors. His finest work is pregnant with potentialities which he himself has not wholly realized, and suggests possibilities in a way which it is difficult to explain, but impossible to ignore.

It is true that there is nothing specifically classical in his work, but it has certain qualities none the less which are in accordance with those specified by Busoni, and indicated by other findings set forth in preceding chapters, as being the desiderata of the music of to-morrow. And first and foremost among these is Bartók's superb gift of melodic invention; he is, indeed, among the foremost melodists of modern times. Again, in such things as the first

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string quartet, the orchestral *Portraits*, and the *Images* he shows himself to possess a highly individual style of polyphonic writing in which the melodic progressions determine the harmony instead of the harmony conditioning the melody. Finally, he possesses a highly developed rhythmic sense, once he gets away from the peasant dance on the village green which is perhaps of rather too frequent occurrence in his music.

It is true that these qualities are to be found to a greater extent in his early than in his late works, and that of recent years he seems to have been engaged in forcing his talents into a direction wholly unsuited to them, but the fact remains that even in the later works his powers remain to a great extent unimpaired, especially his admirable melodic invention and his alert rhythmic sense. All that is necessary in order that he should achieve as fine work in the future as he has achieved in the past is a drastic purgation and simplification of his harmonic style, and this may yet come about. It is at least certain that it is too early to despair of a composer who has already and so often proved himself to be so richly gifted.

It is—or at any rate should be—always a danger-signal to a critic when he finds himself admiring the

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early work of an artist in preference to his late; the chances are that it is he himself who is at fault, and not the artist, and that he is simply unable to follow the latter beyond a certain point in his development. At the same time, the phenomenon of an auspicious beginning and a subsequent decline is by no means uncommon; few to-day would deny that it is to be perceived in the work of Mendelssohn and Schumann, to name only two outstanding examples in the past, and at the present time it would almost seem to have become the rule rather than the exception. Even their greatest admirers are generally willing to admit that the later work of Strauss, Debussy, Ravel, Delius, Stravinsky, and Schönberg constitutes a distinct falling-off in comparison with either their early or middle-period work; and their most successful achievements are all felt to be terminal points, beyond which it is impossible, not merely for any successors, but for their creators themselves, to progress. Whatever the merits of such things as *Elektra*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, or the *Sacre du Printemps*—and they may be great and enduring—they seem to exhaust all the possibilities they opened up, leaving their composers with the alternative of either repeating themselves or else trying to do something entirely different, and exercising

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either no influence at all or else a pernicious and sterilizing one on those who come after.

The best of Bartók's work, although he himself would seem for the time being at least to have turned his back upon it and to have gone in a different direction, does not convey this sense of finality; the same is true to a much greater extent of that of Sibelius. Whatever may be its merits or demerits—and this is not the issue here—one does not feel with it the impossibility of progressing farther in the same direction. Even if Sibelius himself never does, he gives a sense of liberation in the present and hope for the future which, even if it should prove to be an illusion, is nevertheless an inspiring and a stimulating one. And if the value of Bartók's best work consists in the extent to which it seems to reveal an old and familiar beauty in novel procedures, ideas and emotions reminiscent of much encountered in the music of the past expressed in a modern vocabulary: that of Sibelius, on the contrary, seems rather to reveal a fresh and unsuspected beauty in the old, a wholly new mode of thought and expression embodied in the idioms of the past. Sibelius, in fact, as the present writer has observed in his study of that composer's work, almost alone at the present time, 'has conclusively shown, what

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most people had legitimately begun to doubt, that it is still just as possible as it ever was to say something absolutely new, vital, and original, without having to invent a new syntax, a new vocabulary, a new language, in order to do so'.

At the same time Sibelius is no reactionary, in the conventional sense of the word. Although his musical language is in large part and in essence that of Beethoven, he does not hesitate on occasion, when it suits his expressive purpose, to make use of the most daring and recondite neologisms which, however, he always succeeds in naturalizing, so to speak, and integrating into the body of accepted musical speech—there is never anything merely speculative or experimental in his procedures. His work is thus of importance in foreshadowing Busoni's condition that the new classicism will consist, amongst other things, in the consolidation of all that has proved to be of enduring value in the experimentations of recent years, and its embodiment in solid forms. Needless to say, he does not go as far as is possible in this direction; he is, after all, a member of the older generation, and one whose style was already formed before much that may yet prove to be of permanent value in recent experiments was even thought of.

Sibelius is also a significant portent for the future,

as conceived by Busoni, in that melody is in his work the sovereign element, 'the determiner of all developments, the bearer of the idea, and begetter of the harmony'. Mr. H. C. Colles, for example, in a recent short essay on Sibelius contained in the volume *Our Contemporaries*, written by different hands, gives an interesting account of a conversation with Sibelius which took place about twenty-five years ago, in which the composer defined the contrast which existed between his own work and that of Haydn, who happened to be the topic of discussion at the moment, by saying that whereas with the latter the melodic forms seemed to be largely conditioned by harmonic considerations, with himself the harmony was the outcome of the melodic exigencies. (The work in question, incidentally, was the Fourth Symphony, which, needless to say, was written long before the pronouncement of Busoni to which reference has been made.)

In one respect most of the mature work of Sibelius does not seem to conform to the requirements of the new classical art of the future, as postulated by Busoni. While his earlier music is full of large-scale melodic constructions, in his later music he tends rather to avoid them, preferring for the most part to work with small-scale, pregnant, thematic frag-



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ments, even if they are often built up eventually into larger melodic organisms. On the other hand, the Seventh Symphony would seem to some extent to indicate a partial regression in this respect, for the large-scale trombone theme plays the leading thematic role in the work.

It is also true that Sibelius's mature art, considered as a portent for the future, would seem to belie the condition that it should be primarily polyphonic, for viewed as a whole it certainly reveals a constant diminution in the extent of the employment of contrapuntal devices, and a steadily increasing preference for homophony. But here again the last symphony, and its predecessor also, suggest a partial reaction, at least. Both the string passage with which the Sixth Symphony begins, and that which leads up to the statement of the big trombone theme in the Seventh, to mention only two examples, are highly organized pieces of purely polyphonic writing—of a kind, moreover, it is interesting and significant to observe, recognizably akin to that of the later Palestrina, which, as we have already seen, is in many respects likely to be the model for the polyphony of the new classicism. It is also noteworthy that although the formal tendency of most of the later work is not conspicuously architectonic, but

rather dramatic on the contrary, the Seventh Symphony definitely is, with a classic monumentality which suggests that of a Greek temple or Roman forum. Finally, in all his later work one finds a continually increasing distaste for anything in the nature of pictorial illustration or literary description—anything which, in the words of Busoni, lies outside the nature of music; also ‘the elimination of mere sensuousness, the renunciation of subjectivity, and the reconquest of serenity’.

The later art of Sibelius, in fact, seems, more than any other that we have so far been considering, to constitute a fulfilment of the new classical ideal, and therefore to provide a foretaste of the art of the immediate future. In his whole course of development, too, Sibelius is symbolically representative of his generation, for, starting as a romantic, nationalist individualist in his first works, he becomes a classicist in his last.

It is an interesting and significant fact which is probably something more than a mere coincidence that Busoni, in his youth, was a close friend of Sibelius, and, in his maturity, of Bernard van Dieren, in whose work also one finds an embodiment and realization of the ideals and prognostications of Busoni which we have been examining.

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In saying this it might perhaps be as well to emphasize once more the fact that we are not here directly concerned so much with the purely aesthetic value of the music of the composers discussed, as with the relatively unimportant minor question of tendency, direction, and so on—although it is, of course, very difficult sometimes to separate the two things.

The point is, however, that the present writer's high opinion concerning the purely aesthetic value of this composer's music, as expressed in an essay contained in *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, is immaterial to the present issue: which is, that if Busoni's prognosis is correct, and if the additional conclusions tentatively arrived at in the foregoing pages are justified, then the art of van Dieren provides a significant index pointing towards the music of the future. Granting the premisses, in fact, the rest naturally follows.

In the first place, his work constitutes a striking fulfilment of Busoni's and Valéry's condition that the new classicism will consist in the organization and exploitation of whatever has been found to be of enduring value in the experimentations of recent times. It is an indisputable fact, for example, that in many of his early works, notably his first string

quartet and the *Toccata* and *Sketches* for piano, van Dieren was one of the most 'advanced' composers, in the conventional sense of the word, of the great pre-war experimental days; his later work exemplifies that process of selection, stabilization, and orderly development which Valéry claims to be apparent in the life of every artist who lives long enough to find himself.

In the second place, his work fulfils the provision that the new classicism will consist in the abandonment of thematic construction in favour of pure melody. It is a mere matter of tape-measurement to be able to show that the melodic writing of van Dieren is more sustained than that of any other composer living. That everything in his music derives directly from the melodic line is evident to any reasonably intelligent listener or reader, and that the texture of his music is above all polyphonic will hardly be disputed by even his most hostile critics—it is only a bare statement of fact.

In the third place, his work does not consist in 'deep thoughts, or messages, or metaphysics', but is pure music, which 'does not undertake tasks which lie outside its nature'—there is no literary or pictorial description in the music of van Dieren—and the spiritual key-note of his art consists precisely

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in that 'reconquest of serenity' of which Busoni speaks.

On the other hand, although there is nothing nationalistic in his art, it is certainly highly personal, both in thought and style; it is impossible to mistake his work for that of any one else. Again, it would be untrue to say that it is distinguished exactly by its ready accessibility; despite the recognition that it is beginning to receive, and which is undoubtedly destined to increase in years to come, one can hardly imagine that it will ever become popular. Finally, so far from having any stylistic or formal affinities with architecture, his work stands at the very opposite pole to this art in all essential respects.

Still, the fact remains that in many if not most of its features and characteristics, the art of van Dieren achieves a remarkably close approach to the realization and embodiment of the aesthetic ideal set forth in Busoni's pronouncements, and supplemented by the various other conclusions arrived at in the foregoing pages. For this reason it is probable that his work will exercise a more stimulating and beneficial influence upon the coming generation than is likely to be exercised by that of any other composer of the present time, with the possible exception of Sibelius. The fact that in the work of

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neither of them does one find a complete realization of the ideal set forth is only what one would naturally expect, for they are not composers of the future, but of the present, with their roots in the past. In other words, if the art which we have been trying to anticipate already existed in the present, it would obviously not be the art of the future.

It is no mere coincidence, then, that the two composers, of the older and the younger generation respectively, whose achievement seems to promise most for the future should be thus intimately related to Busoni, not merely personally, but spiritually; for the musical art of the future of which Busoni dreamed has been adumbrated in the work of these two to a greater extent than in that of any other contemporary composers. It is also no mere coincidence that, just as Sibelius has found more appreciation and understanding of his art in this country than anywhere else, so van Dieren stands in closer relation to England than to any other country; not merely by virtue of the fact that he has chosen to make his residence here, but also because his work has already begun to exert a considerable influence upon the younger generation of English composers, and upon no others as yet. And we have already seen, in a preceding chapter, that other considera-

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tions have independently led us to the conclusion that the prospects for music in this country in the near future seem to be brighter than they have ever been since the sixteenth century, and more favourable than they are in any other of the larger and more important countries in Europe to-day.

Indeed, it is exceedingly instructive and entertaining to observe how the formerly 'artistic' races of Europe, the *dolce far niente* Italians and the *nichevo* Russians, have now become hard, practical, efficient, and imperialistic, as did the philosophic, dreaming Teutons fifty years ago, with precisely the same disastrous consequences to their art and especially their music; while England, the land of Philistines and shopkeepers, which has infected the whole world with her materialism and love of sport, has now become one of the few countries left in the world which are fit for artists to live and work in. England, in fact, after having lost her soul, is in process of finding it again, while most other great nations (except France) are busy losing theirs. One looks forward to the possibly not far distant day when England, having finally weaned her bawling colonial offspring and shaken off the succubus of world dominion which together have drained her of most of her spiritual strength in recent

times, becomes again what she was in Elizabethan days.

However that may be, the present circumstances and conditions are uniformly propitious to creative musical activity in this country, save only one which, unfortunately, also happens to be a very important one: namely, the attitude of mind and code of aesthetic values which largely dominate English musical life to-day, and are mainly responsible for all its worst features and for our complete inability to induce other nations to take us seriously in music—the cult of the English Gentleman. It is not, of course, confined to music, but permeates every aspect of the national life. It may well be true that our military triumphs have all been won on the playing-fields of Eton, but it is very certain that most of our artistic failures have been sustained there; and the effects have been more widespread and devastating in the field of music than in any other, largely on account of the deep-rooted social inferiority complex from which most English musicians suffer.

Until comparatively recent times, indeed, music was regarded in this country as a distinctly disreputable occupation, and the musician more or less as a social outcast, like the *mimus* of the late Roman



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times or the *jongleur* of the Middle Ages. Even in Victorian days, although accounted a pleasing accomplishment in a delicately nurtured gentlewoman, music was still not considered a fitting occupation for any self-respecting gentleman. It is only to-day that the musician in our midst has ceased to be regarded as necessarily a social inferior to a banker or a bookmaker, a pork-butcher or a politician.

The credit for this social rehabilitation of the musician is primarily due to the example of the late Sir Hubert Parry: a fact, incidentally, which explains the great reputation—so mystifying to foreign observers—that this composer enjoys in the best circles in musical England. It has nothing to do with his music, which, with the possible exception of a few quite pleasant but in no way remarkable songs, is completely negligible, and lacking even the sure craftsmanship and knowledge of effect that constitute the redeeming features of the otherwise similar achievement of his colleague and contemporary, Sir Charles Stanford. His immense prestige in this country, indeed—non-existent anywhere else—rests solely on the fact, that, in the words of another eminent musical knight, Sir Hugh Allen, he ‘added dignity to the profession of music’.

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The remark is peculiarly illuminating. One is involuntarily reminded of the title of one of Mr. Aldous Huxley's early short stories—'Eupompus gave splendour to art by numbers'. What has art to do with numbers? What has music to do with dignity? What dignity, one would like to know, can an artist possibly confer on his art other than that of practising it greatly? The answer is, of course, that music is not, as some of us may rashly have supposed, a creative art, but, as Sir Hugh Allen says, a profession—now a respectable profession, thanks to Sir Hubert Parry, into which one could put one's son without any longer having the fear that he might be ostracized by his Eton and Oxford friends on account of it.

The consequence of this social rehabilitation of the musician has been that it has gone to his head. He tries to be more gentlemanly than any born gentleman could ever be. He has become 'a person of the most respectable connexions', and the result that it has had on his aesthetic outlook is precisely the same as that which it had on Samuel Butler's immortal 'brother-in-law to the haberdasher of Mr. Spurgeon (Oh God! Oh Montreal!)'. Discobolus must be put away in a corner because he has no pants wherewith to cover himself, and composers

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such as Berlioz and Liszt, with their frank display of emotion and self-expression, are equally considered to be vulgar and indecent by our self-constituted guardians of musical propriety. Things have even come to such a pass that it is becoming increasingly difficult for a musician in this country to earn a living or gain a hearing unless he has been to a public school or a university, or else has influential supporters in the best social circles.

A significant example of the lengths to which this has gone was recently afforded by the public utterance of one of our best-known composers, who declared that the impulse which drove him to write music was in essence identically the same as that which impelled his fellow gentlemen to go huntin', shootin', and fishin'—and one fears that it is only too true.

This spirit of smug, pharisaical gentlemanliness, complicated with social snobbery, permeates every aspect of English musical life at the present time, from top to bottom—alike in composition, vocal and instrumental execution, conducting, scholarship, research, and criticism. It is this spirit which drove Frederick Delius to spend his days abroad; this spirit which, through his acceptance of it, just prevented Edward Elgar from being the great artist

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he would otherwise undoubtedly have been; this spirit which, more than anything else, caused the tragic and untimely end of Peter Warlock, one of the most exquisitely gifted musicians England has produced since Tudor and Stuart times; this spirit which stunts or oppresses or forces into a pusillanimous compromise every potential native talent; this spirit which is the absolute antithesis of everything that we call art, and which must be fought as one fights the devil, without rest and without quarter.

There can be no hope for English music until this fatal confusion of artistic with false social and ethical values has been broken down. Only then will the English composer gain that inner self-respect, that spiritual integrity born of isolation, which is a necessary condition of great artistic achievements—without which great art is indeed impossible.

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